

**An Afrocentric Exploration of South Africa's Homeland Policy with
Specific Reference to Vhavenda Traditional Leadership and
Institutions, 1898-1994**

by

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Declaration

I declare that “An Afrocentric Exploration of South Africa’s Homeland Policy with Specific Reference to Vhavenda Traditional Leadership and Institutions, 1898-1994” dissertation submitted to the University of Limpopo for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) in History, has not previously been submitted by me for a degree at this or any other university; that it is my own work in design and in execution, and that all material contained herein has been duly acknowledged.

Mahosi, T.N.

19 January 2021

Surname, Initials (title)

Date

Dedication

This work is dedicated to my late sister Jacqueline Dikeledi, my late parents Mary Mukatshelwa Mudzunga and Andrew Masindi as well as my departed maternal aunt Annah Tshamano Mulaudzi.

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Abstract

The subject of traditional leadership has been, and will always be, the subject of academic debate in various disciplines and varying objectives throughout the years. However, it is in South Africa to a large extent, but Venda specifically, that this study focuses on the discussion on the controversial subject of *vhuhosi* (traditional leadership) within the homeland system. This study specifically identifies *vhuhosi* and institutions of Vhavenḁa as a topic for research given its muddled history during the dark days of colonial subjugation and apartheid oppression and suppression. It is for this reason that this study explores South Africa's homeland policy with specific reference to *vhuhosi* of Vhavenḁa and institutions (1898-1994). In order to do this the study starts by describing the nature of the relationship between the South African government and *vhuhosi* of Vhavenḁa on the eve of homeland policy as a way of setting the tone of the Afrocentric exploratory paradigm. The objective is to expose the gradual political and socio-economic changes that *vhuhosi* and institutions of Vhavenḁa were subjected to during South Africa's political development. The study then analyses the development of ethnicity *vis-à-vis* the influence of ethnic identity during the period surrounding the establishment of Vhavenḁa homeland. Given this background it then describes the changing power relations between the South African government and *mahosi* within the Venda homeland. Significantly, the study examines the impact of Vhavenḁa homeland on the internal relations among *mahosi* of Vhavenḁa as well as Vhavenḁa's cultural conception of royalty and governance.

The current researcher identifies the Afrocentric theory as a vehicle to embark on the explorative nature of this study. Unlike other theoretical paradigms that conducted research on *vhuhosi* and institutions for colonial and apartheid objectives, the Afrocentric approach was preferred as it puts African values at the centre. Therefore the Afrocentric theory was preferred as a way of debunking the Eurocentric/Western and liberal research on African subjects such as *vhuhosi* and institutions. Hence oral interviews played an important role to complement the written and archival material available.

Keywords: *vhuhosi* and institutions, African values, Vhavenḁa, homeland, apartheid, ritual murder, witch-hunting and witch-burning.

List of Abbreviations

AIC	African Independent Churches
AIC	African Indigenous Churches
ANC	African National Congress
AWB	Afrikaanse Weerstand Beweging
AZAPO	Azanian Peoples' Organisation
AZASCO	Azanian Students' Congress
BAO	Archives of the Secretary for Bantu Affairs
BC	Black Consciousness
BCM	Black Consciousness Movement
BECO	Bold Evangelical Christian Organisation
BEN	Bureau for Information and Broadcasting
BENSO	Archives of the Bureau of Economic Research, Co-operation and Development
BPC	Black Peoples' Convention
BSO	Archives of Bantu Administration and Development
BTA/BTS	Archives for Bantu Affairs/Bantu and Traditional Affairs/ Tradisionale Sake
CAD	Central Archives Depot/Department
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CES	Chief Education Specialist
CNU	Council for National Unity. Venda successor government after the 'coup d'etat' that replaced Ravele's administration.
CoGHSTA	Department of Cooperative Governance, Human Settlements and Traditional Affairs (Provincial)
COGTA	Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (National)
CONTRALESA	Congress of Traditional Leaders of South Africa
COSATU	Congress of South Africa's Trade Unions
CSDS	Centre for Social and Development Studies

DAS	Doctor of Philosophy in African Studies (Univen)
DET	Department of Education and Training
DG	Director-General
DNA	Archives of the Department of Native Affairs
DPLG	Department of Provincial and Local Government
DRC	Dutch Reformed Church
ECA	Economic Commission for Africa
ECO	Evangelical Christian Organisation
ELCSA	Evangelical Lutheran Church of Southern Africa
EMS	European Missionary Societies
GG	Archives of the Governor-General/Central Government
G.O.V.	Archives of the National Government
HKN	Archives of the Chief Natives Commissioner
HTL	House of Traditional Leaders
IDAF	International Defence and Aid Fund
IDASA	International Defence and Aid for South Africa
IDASA	Institute for Democratic Alternatives in South Africa later changed to Institute for Democracy in South Africa
IDP	Integrated Development Policy
ILGD/CLGF	Institute of Local Governance and Development, Commonwealth Local Government Forum
INLOGOV	Institute for Local Government and Development
KLT	Archives of the Commissioner for Land Affairs
KZN	KwaZulu-Natal (Province)
LDE	Archives of the Department of Land Affairs
LPHTL	Limpopo Province House of Traditional Leadership
LRLCC	Limpopo Regional Land Claims Commission
LTA	Limpopo Tourism Agency
LTLIA	Limpopo Traditional Leadership and Institutions Act
MDM	Mass Democratic Movement
MDM	Mopani District Municipality

MEC	Member of Executive Council
NAD	Archives of Native Affairs Department
NOTRACO	Northern Transvaal Action Committee
NGK	Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk
NHTL	National House of Traditional Leaders
NP	National Party
NTS	Archives of the Natives Commissioner
NOTYCO	Northern Transvaal Youth Congress
NUSAS	National Union of South African Students
OAU	Organisation of African Unity
PER	Potchefstroom Elektriese Regsblad
PEMS	Publications and Conference Management Section
RAU	Rand Afrikaans University/ Universiteit
RCC	Roman Catholic Church
'RoV'	Republic of Venda
RSA	Republic of South Africa
SABC	South African Broadcasting Corporation
SAB-NTS	Archives of the Secretary for Native Affairs
SACC	South African Council of Churches
SADTU	South African Democratic Teachers' Union
SAGG	Archives of the Governor-General
SAIRR	South African Institute of Race Relations
Sanef	South African Editors Forum
SANNC	South African National Natives Congress
SANSCO	South African National Students' Congress
SAO	Senior Administrative Officer
SAR	South African Republic/Suid Afrikaanse Republiek
SASM	South African Students Movement
SASO	South African Students Organisation
SAYCO	South African Youth Congress
SEAP	Special Employment Approach Programme

SERSAS	South-Eastern Region Seminar in African Studies
SPP	Surplus Peoples' Project
SRC(s)	Students Representative Council(s)
SSA	Senior Subject Advisor
TAB	Archives of the Transvaal Administration Board
TAGOV	Archives of the Transvaal Administration Government
TCA	Thematic Content Analysis
TBVC	Transkei, Bophuthatswana, Venda and Ciskei
THO	Traditional Healers' Organisation
TLM	Thulamela Local Municipality
TTA	Tohoyandou Territorial Authority
UG	Archives of the Union Government/Union of South Africa
UN	United Nations
UNISA	University of South Africa
Univen	University of Venda
UNO	United Nations Organisation
URU	Archives of Office of the Prime Minister/Kantoor van die Eerste Minister
USBL	Unisa School for Business Leadership
VDF	Venda Defence Force
VDM	Vhembe District Municipality
VG	Venda Government
VIPP	Venda Independent Peoples Party
VNP	Venda National Party
VTT	Venda Territorial Authority

Chapter 1

Contextual Orientation of the Study

1.1 Background and Motivation

The process of the colonization of South Africa has its roots in the occupation of the Cape Colony by Dutch explorer, Jan van Riebeeck, in 1652 (Worden, 1994: 7 and 8). Almost three centuries later, the historic Great Trek (1835-1846) led a group of Afrikaners into Venda, in the Soutpansberg District (Spelonken) of the then Transvaal, South Africa, where some decades later they came into contact with King Makhado of Vhavenda. Makhado's bravery during resistance against white occupation between 1864 and 1895, earned him the famous name of "Lion of the North" (Wessman, 1900: 9; South African Republic (SAR)/Transvaal, *A Short History of the Native Tribes of South Africa*, 1905: 64; Stayt, 1968: 16; Conerly, 1990: 61; Nemudzivhaḁi¹, 2017: 62, 108, 239). Some sources are in agreement that the demise of Makhado was allegedly due to poisoning at the hands of a close family circle in 1895 at the behest of the white settlers of Schoemansdal, for whom he was a thorn on the side. In the same vein, official and academic sources aver that his own undoing, which made his guard against the white settlers lax, were constant tensions with his brothers who then conspired with the whites to plot his demise (Stayt, 1968: 16; Bureau for Economic Research, Co-operation and Development Benso, 1979: 20; Khangala, 1999: 4; Nemudzivhaḁi, 2017: 43 and 291). In essence, the involvement of the whites in the contestation for the Ramabulana kingship throne pitted brothers against one another, thus weakening their opposition to and resilience from white infiltration into Venda.

Makhado was succeeded by his eldest son Aḁilali Tshilamulela Mphephu (hereafter referred to as Aḁilali Mphephu, between 1895 and 1899; this after triumphing in a dispute over succession against his brothers (Stayt, 1968: 16; Khangala, 1999: 5). Just like his predecessor father, Aḁilali Mphephu refused to extend a hand of friendship to the white settlers and refused to pay tax to white authorities. This handed the

¹ The late Dr. Mphaya Hendrick Nemudzivhaḁi was a specialist in Venda History and a former Director-General in the Office of the 'Presidency and National Assembly' of the former Venda Homeland.

authorities a conspiratorial excuse to accuse Mphephu of installing himself without consulting the SAR. He was consequently charged with allegedly flouting their so-called sanction for him to succeed his father, Makhado (Archives of the Department of Land Affairs (LDE), 1898; Netsianda, 2001: 16). This, among the factors alluded to above, led to the outbreak of the 'Mphephu-Boer War of 1898-1899', which subsequently accelerated the final subjugation of Vhavenda and the occupation of the Venda area. After his defeat Alilali Mphephu fled into exile in Zimbabwe (then called Southern Rhodesia) (Conerly, 1990: 60-61; Khangala, 1999: 5; Nemudzivhaqi, 1977: 83-84). From this end, it suffices to say that the final nail in the coffin of the subjugation of black South Africans came during the aftermath of the 'Mphephu-Boer War, 1898-1899'. Furthermore, it is prudent to say that Alilali Mphephu was the last Vhavenda ruler, if not black South African ruler, to be subjugated after years of resisting white rule.

Indisputably, compared to other cultural groups in South Africa, Vhavenda are regarded as the smallest African group numerically. SAR (1905: 62) and Stayt (1968: 1) contend that although it was difficult to furnish adequate information regarding the numerical strength of Vhavenda, they originally inhabited approximately a third of the Soutpansberg District of the then Transvaal. In this regard, Nemudzivhaqi (1977: 1) and Schapera (1966: 63) assert that the geographical position of Venda from the most southern tip of the African continent meant that Vhavenda had no contact with any white man before the beginning of the first decade of the 19th century; hence their late subjugation. In contrast, Stayt (1968: 1) attributes their prolonged subjugation to "the native power in the north which was a menace to the Transvaal Republic". The author further says that this made the white menace ineffectual; hence the defeat of Mphephu finally happened in 1899 after which he was exiled into Zimbabwe. He only returned from exile after 1901 to find his land excised. He was then forcibly resettled on the infertile plains of the Nzhelele Valley, the current Ramabulana settlement and headquarters (TAB, KLT, 2/1/6, September 1904; Netsianda, 2001: 24, 32; Conerly 1990: 68, 72, 78, 79).

These political developments signalled the beginning of the gradual erosion of Alilali Mphephu's control over populations and distribution of land (Union of South Africa 13/10/1; TA GOV 1152, PS 50/37/08, 19.0.1909; VG, Commission of Inquiry into

Venda Vuhosi Affairs, No. 38; Status of the Republic of South Africa: Black Administration Act No. 38 of 1927). Significantly this led to the vulnerability of Vhavenda traditional leadership (*vuhosi*) and institutions, following the appointment of the Governor-General as the Supreme Chief of all black South Africans. Against this background the proposed study focuses on “South Africa’s Homeland Policy with specific reference to Vhavenda Traditional Leadership and Institutions, 1898-1994”. The proposed study has identified 1898 as a starting point since the period represents a watershed moment after the death of Makhado which culminated in the outbreak of the Mphedu-Boer War and the final subjugation of Vhavenda. The study ends in 1994 because the year signifies the official demise of apartheid and the homeland policy in particular.

1.2 Research Problem

At the dawn of democracy some authors argued that it would be inevitable to transform the institution of traditional leadership (*vuhosi*) to suit the composition of the new dispensation and in order to “depart from the apartheid legacy” (Teffo, 1995; Keulder, 1998; Mashele, 2002). Other scholars claimed that the institution of *vuhosi* was at the crossroads given its history of controversy, compromise, collaboration and co-option into the white government’s segregation homeland policy (Conerly, 1990; Boikanyo, 1990; Bekker, 1991; Ake, 1993; Dangale, 1993; Mashele, 2002). This raised the researcher’s interest to investigate how *vuhosi* of Vhavenda and institutions had morphed and/or changed under colonial and apartheid rule. Generally, much of the literature consulted mainly focused on the homeland policy and the role played by *vuhosi* and institutions, alas from a Eurocentric/Western, Liberal and Afrikaner perspective. Therefore the central problem is the prevailing dominance of Eurocentric/Western, Liberal and Afrikaner Nationalist literature on apartheid South Africa’s homeland policy, particularly regarding *vuhosi* and institutions (Bundy, 1979; Omer-Cooper, 1987; Dubow, 1991; Posel, 1991; Beinart and Dubow, 1995; Davenport, 1978, 1987 and 2000; among others).

As such the current researcher is of the view that these schools of thought were exclusive of the African voice because of their paternalistic and hegemonic approach, thereby closing the space for the African perspective on the subject. In essence these

schools wrote about, as well as for, black South Africans as if they were mere spectators or appendages within their economic and socio-political settings and experiences. Halala (2011) puts it succinctly that the theoretical frameworks from European experience had the negative effect of distorting the realities of African historical experience. It is for this reason that the researcher is of the view that there is a need to afford the proposed study the alternative voice, which is the Afrocentric perspective or Afrocentricity.

Based on the above it is worth noting that Bekker (1991: 126), for example, contends that “homeland leaders participated in the establishment of administrative and constitutional structures based on tribalism- so much that at times it appeared to have been inspired by them, rather than imposed on them.” Bekker (1991: 126) further says that “...homelands made their own laws on chieftainship and tribal administration... from Item 30 of Schedule 1 to the Self-governing Territories Constitution Act, 21 of 1971.” The truth is that homeland leaders, generally senior traditional leaders (*mahosi*, singular *khosi*; previously called chiefs), were “puppets on a string” who just promoted and enforced the apartheid policies of their masters in Pretoria, the administrative capital of South Africa. Therefore, they practically could not have drafted laws that contradicted the policy objectives of the central government, their main financial and power benefactor.

1.3 Operational Definition of Concepts

1.3.1 Apartheid

This was an official policy of the National Party (NP) government which literally meant racial separation/segregation of different races at all spheres. The policy was made official after the coming into power of the NP of then Prime Minister Dr. D.F. Malan, following its victory in the general elections of 1948. What followed later was the enactment of a barrage of legislation such as the Bantu Authorities Act of 1951, Bantu Homelands Citizenship Act of 1970 and the Promotion of Bantu Self-Government Act of 1959 (Omer-Cooper, 1987) to mention a few. These legislation covered political, socio-economic and cultural aspects.

1.3.2 Homeland Policy

Previously referred to as the Bantustan policy, it was put into effect with the main objective to officially designate ten tribal territories along the different cultural and language groups of IsiXhosa (Transkei and Ciskei), IsiZulu (Kwazulu), Setswana (Bophuthatswana), southern Sotho (Qwaqwa), northern Sotho (Lebowa), Tshivenda (Venda), Xitsonga/Shangaan (Gazankulu), Isindebele (Kwandebele) and Isiwati (Kangwane). In essence the policy rendered every black South African a citizen of the respective homelands/Bantustans. Four of these homelands, Transkei, Bophuthatswana, Venda and Ciskei (TBVC), in that order, 'opted for independence', resultantly stripping black South Africans of their South African citizenship (Saunders, 1994; Davenport, 2000).

1.3.3 *Vhuhosi*

This is Vhavenda equivalent of traditional leadership. In order to achieve the objective of the homeland policy the apartheid government co-opted *mahosi* (senior traditional leaders) and made them 'chief' ministers and/ or ministers of the respective ethnic homelands. The senior *mahosi* of the four 'independent territories' were subsequently elevated to become 'presidents' of each respective homeland, in what was termed 'grand apartheid'. Following this, in Venda, then *Khosi* Patrick Mphhephu Ramabulana was elevated to be a 'paramount chief' (equivalent of *khosikhulu* in the homeland policy nomenclature or principal traditional leader in the language of South Africa's democratic government²) so as to be above other *mahosi* in status (Khangala, 1999; Nemudzivhadi, 2017).

² See the Republic of Venda Constitution Act (Act No. 9 of 1979); Department of Provincial and Local Government (DPLG), "Draft White Paper on Traditional Leadership and Governance", October 2002; Limpopo Traditional Leadership and Institutions Act (Act No. 6 of 2005); Government Gazette vol. 535, no. 32904, "Traditional Leadership and Governance Framework Amendment Act (Act No. 23 of 2009).

1.3.4 Ethnic identity

Identity and culture have for many years been seen as major socio-political issues occupying centre stage in literary, political, social and even economic discourses (Posel, 1991; Mashige, 2004). In the apartheid discourse racial diversity was characterised by a diversity of languages and cultures. In South Africa, black South Africans were divided socio-politically into different ethnic language groups for the purpose of ethnicity and political expediency: to trump up the successful implementation of the homeland policy. In the words of Schapera (1966: 67) “Bantu peoples have been divided...on the basis of data partly geographical, partly linguistic, partly historical and partly cultural.”

1.4 Literature Review

Studies have been conducted across disciplines on African traditional systems within the colonial and Apartheid setup. However, there was no in-depth and exploratory study on the specific objectives raised in this study which aims to explore the homeland policy with specific reference to *vuhosi* of Vhavenda and institutions. Therefore contextualizing this study on *vuhosi* of Vhavenda within South Africa’s homeland system necessitated a selection of sources across disciplines for the purpose of literature review. This was assisted by the scholarly approaches, *alas* for the sole purpose of government segregation and homeland policy, which focused on customary and indigenous issues as well as works by missionaries, anthropologists, ethnologists, sociologists, historians and political scientists. The conclusion is that in essence these sources have transcended various disciplines. The literature review on identified a few sources to discuss the salient points that are related to the objectives of the study as is it done below.

1.4.1 The Concepts of leader and leadership

The current researcher realised that the study could not afford to avoid opening the discussion by giving a theoretical explanation of the concepts leader and leadership as this was certainly a logical start. This was aimed at arriving at an understanding of how leadership in general related to power, authority and legitimacy as these elements are essential to ruling and *vuhosi*, in particular. The current researcher initially

focuses on these concepts in the general context with the ultimate aim of proceeding to the African context of leadership, power, authority and legitimacy in general so as to lay the basis to an understanding of the African context of leadership. Furthermore, the current researcher hoped to use this as a fundamental departure towards a discussion on the nature of *vuhosi* of Vhavenda, its authority and institutions in particular, before it was corrupted by the advent of colonialism and later apartheid.

From the sources on the theories of leader and leadership one gradually understands that being a leader distinguishes the individual from the rest of a larger group or society to which he or she belongs in terms of power, authority and social influence (Hague and Harrop, 2004: 12-15; Cartwright, 1983: 19-288; Schraeder, 2000: 64-141; *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English, New Edition*, 1987: 593; *Collins Cobuild's Essential English Dictionary*, 1989: 444). In support of this statement it is further pointed out that a leader is one who is able to use his influence to the point where a group rallies towards the same goals (Batesman and Snell, 1999 and 2002: 406 and 380, 398, 401, 425 as well as 429; Shaw, 1981: 316; Schraeder, 2000: 64-71; Hague and Harrop, 2004: 12-15; Cartwright, 1983: 19-21, 33, 34, 286-288). From the preceding statements it follows that a leader may only be able to make a group rally towards the same goals if he or she displays the unique characteristics such as vision and charisma. Although in agreement with the previous authors, Othman (2000: 131-2) cautions that charisma is not an end to the means in as far as good leadership, let alone leadership, is concerned as it is dependent on specific situations and experiences over time. However, it suffices to note that from the explanation on leadership it becomes difficult to extract and to reduce from, or even to avoid, these generalizations on leadership. Regardless of this argument Othman and other authors are in unison on the significance of the leader and leadership in a group, if such a group is to attain its objectives, to the disadvantage of opposing entities (Othman, 2000: 132; Cartwright, 1983: 19, 288; Schraeder, 2000: 64-141; Batesman and Snell, 1999: 406 and 2002: 380, 398, 401, 425, 429; Shaw, 1981: 316).

It further flows from above that it is the responsibility of the leader to identify goals and vision, which play a role in rallying the group around the leader's objectives. In

corroboration, Batesman and Snell (1999: 406 and 2002: 380, 398, 401, 425, 429) maintain that a leader must be one who is able to “articulate the vision clearly and more often” to the group. Thus a leader should not only be the one to create goals and a vision, but must stay true to them once they have been set. Furthermore, the way in which the leader executes his or her responsibilities is a process which distinguishes such an individual from the rest. As such, an individual who lacks these qualities does not deserve such accolades because a leader has an obligatory focus towards achieving goals for the benefit of the entire group and thus create a rallying point for respect, support and loyalty. Batesman and Snell (1999 (a): 411-412) further state that though a leader might be in a position of power, how such power is exercised defines such a leader. According to these authors a good leader uses power constructively and morally, thereby inspiring trust, respect and commitment to a vision such that his/her behaviour “influences people’s attitudes and performances” (Batesman and Snell, 1999: 413 and 2002: 388). To support these authors’ views one Maxwell (*Sowetan Letters*, 2019: 20) contends that “a leader is one who knows the way, goes the way and shows the way”. Therefore, the above assertions flow well into what is echoed by Ng’oma, *Weekly Angel of Zambia*, 30th November – 4th December, 2005) who opines that:

A true leader will spell out the goals but will not persecute those that do not agree with him, instead he will openly and vigorously test the stereotyped views, methods and strategies.

The foregoing discussion on a leader logically flows into the concept of leadership since it alludes to the qualities of such an individual. As mentioned earlier the individual might assume leadership by virtue of being powerful; not necessarily as a passive beneficiary of events (Cartwright, 1983: 20; Ng’oma, 2005: 9). In contrast, an individual might also assume such a position “through bravery, especially in territorial acquisitions as a result of tribal warfare” (Institute for Local Governance and Development (INLOGOV), 1995: 18), or as a result of heredity or because at the time of appointment he/ she was the only choice for the position (Daphne, 1982: 1; Bekker,

1993: 200; Ajayi, 1992: 126; Johnson, 1981: 215; Mönning, 1967: 249; Maloka, 1995: 35-43). Therefore it flows from the preceding statements that a discussion of leadership, power, authority and legitimacy is essential; hence it follows below.

1.4.2 Leadership versus power, authority and legitimacy

The theory of leadership was extracted from sources of an interdisciplinary nature that give differing views on this particular concept (Cartwright, 1983; Johnson, 1981; Shaw, 1981; Batesman and Snell, 1999 and 2002; Tannenbaum and Massarick, 1957; Hollander and Julian, 1969). Importantly, a common thread runs through their explanations on leadership. These authors are unanimous in that it is not every individual who is a leader and has leadership qualities. One Mawete (*Daily Sun, Speak Up*, Tuesday 26 March 2019: 10) concurs by curtly saying that “anyone can be a leader, but not everyone is a good leader... fairness is the most important attribute of a good leader.” Equally, from the outset Cartwright (1983: 19) mentions that “leadership is a phenomenon which we all think we can recognize, but which becomes elusive and changeable when we try to analyze it.” In another words we usually assume that we understand the meaning of the concept leadership as a position of being the most senior individual in a particular group. The author attempts to correct this perception by contending that leadership relates so much to the individual’s ability to “persuade those who belong to the same group to act voluntarily to one’s wishes”, thereby ensuring commitment to the vision and goals that have been set (Cartwright, 1983: 19). To sum it Mawete (2019: 10) richly encapsulates the above with the words “people need leaders who inspire confidence and listen to their concerns”.

From above it suffices to invoke Shaw’s (1981: 21) assertion that ‘leadership’ refers to a process, whereas a ‘leader’ means a position within the structure of the group or to a person who is in that position. The author further indicates that leadership may be understood as the “process of influencing group activities towards goal setting and goal achievement” (Shaw, 1981: 21). It is very clear that leadership rests on common goals and common purpose within the whole group, meaning that the absence of common goals, common purpose and the ability to influence others in the group strips the individual of these rare qualities: qualities that are meant to bind and hold the group

together in the interests of achievement of that common purpose, regardless of adversities.

Cartwright (1983: 21) avers that leadership refers to the “relationship between individuals, in which one person manages to get others to do what he wishes”, but cautions against considering such relationships as always constituting leadership. From these statements there is no doubt that speaking of the one concept without mentioning the other might prove very difficult. Furthermore, Cartwright (1983: 21) contends that “leadership is the ability to obtain non-coerced, voluntary compliance which enables followers to attain goals which they share with the leader.” As is succinctly put by one Honwane (*Sowetan Letters*, 2019: 20) a good leader should be “a good listener, a patient observer and one who takes time to think of what to say to other people. You also need to be aware of your own weaknesses while using your strengths to empower yourself and others, thus improving the image of your institution.”

Significantly, leadership is defined in terms of a relationship of influence and compatibility among people, based on the objective to attain certain goals, premised on common purpose within a group environment (Cartwright, 1983: 21; Hollander and Julian, 1969: 387-397; Tannebaum and Massarick in Shaw, 1981: 317; Batesman and Snell, 1999: 383 and 2002: 409; Giddens, 1993: 334, 644, 659; Pityana, *City Press Opinion*, August 13, 2006; Mageza, *City Press Opinion*, July 30, 2006; Nkuna, 2005: 88-89). Therefore, in essence a leader exists by virtue of having a group of people to lead, with a need to exercise such leadership and achieve certain goals through them, with them and not necessarily for them. The manner in which the individual exercises leadership determines the kind of qualities attributed to that individual and is in turn determined by the character of that leader. Comprehensively, what can be singled out are vision, influence, leadership perspective, motivation, legitimacy, power and authority as some of the traits associated with leadership. For the purpose of this study the concepts that are mainly relevant are power, authority and legitimacy so as to later show how they have a bearing on the power, authority and legitimacy of *vuhosi* of Vhavenda and institutions before and during the era of homeland policy.

Three typologies of leadership have been distinguished and these are legal-rational authority, charismatic authority and traditional authority (Ajayi, 1992: 125-126; Shaw, 1981: 318-326; Batesman and Snell, 2002: 411-412; Dawisha, 2003: n.p.). It is in this context that the current researcher makes a distinction between power and authority and the place of legitimacy *vis-à-vis* the two concepts. In the same vein, earlier on in the study authors like Cartwright (1983: 22), Hague and Harrop (2004: 12-15) as well as Batesman and Snell (2002: 411-412) clarify that power refers to exerting pressure or using coercion in order to achieve the intended objectives, thereby consolidating one's position. According to Hague and Harrop (2004: 12-13) as well as Cartwright (1983: 32-38, 288) power is inseparable from politics in the search for influence and it is based on "producing intended effects, achieving one's goals, overcoming the opposition at all costs and it involves inducements and threats, and persuasion and control" in most cases to achieve the intended results.

For Batesman and Snell (2002: 383) as well as Nkuna (2005: 89) it is usually unavoidable to associate effective leadership with power. From this statement it apparently boils down to the fact that effective leadership is about achieving the goals that have been set no matter what. As such power could be used, misused or abused as long as the goals that have been set are achieved. However, Batesman and Snell (1999: 383 and 2002: 409) caution that even if power may help in revealing leadership qualities, it depends on how such a leader uses it that will determine the end results of the goals set by that individual; whether or not it may be for the good of the group. Accordingly, power may be encapsulated as the ability to impose one's will despite resistance of others against such actions (Johnson, 1981: 218; Giddens, 1993: 54, 209, 722, 744; Khapoya, 1994: 128; Comaroff, 1972: 41; Beattie, 1989: 39, 40, 78-79; Nkuna, 2005: 89). Therefore political power may be a relationship which is based on the capacity to affect another's behaviour by some form of sanction which is accompanied by coercive authority. Mabutla (South-eastern Regional Seminar in African Studies [SERSAS], 6 and 7 April 2001: 6) quotes Weber who defines power as:

The possibility of imposing one's will upon the behaviour of others and that in this general sense power is an aspect of most, if not all, social relation.

It suffices to say that should such power be used to the detriment of others it is bound to be destructive rather than being mutually, morally and socially constructive or beneficial to the leadership and the affected group. In addition, therefore, having power and using it appropriately are essential attributes of good and effective leadership (Batesman and Snell, 2002: 401-409; Nkuna, 2005: 89). Therefore, a leader who uses power destructively does this disregarding the fact that in the long run coercive power is self-defeating (Cartwright, 1983: 286). In this vein Pityana (*City Press*, August 13, 2006: 23) avers that the "the strength of the moral character of the leadership is the element that gives it legitimacy". It is against the backdrop of the two preceding statements that the current researcher understands that a charismatic leader should enjoy acceptance and not exact such from the subjects as this will be associated with the abuse of power. If one is to revisit the arguments by Weber as quoted in Ajayi (1992: 125-126), Dawisha (2003, n.p.), Shaw (1981: 318-326) and Giddens (1993: 369, 371 and 756), one adduces that the above statements by Pityana and Cartwright are in agreement that power, unlike authority, is coercive and is equally associated with inducement.

The discussions by various authors above reveal that authority embodies legitimacy and in turn legitimacy is closely associated with authority. According to Batesman and Snell (1999: 383 and 2002: 409) a leader with legitimate powers has the right or authority to tell others what responsibilities to execute. In corroboration, Cartwright (1983: 288), Shaw (1981: 319-321) as well as Hague and Harrop (2004: 12-13) contend that a leader who doubts what he/she does and/ or does not have the conviction that he/she can persuade his/her people towards attaining the set goals is unsure of his/her legitimacy; thus usually leading to coercion so as to achieve his/her goals. In simple terms such a leader lacks legitimacy and the authority to empower the self to persuade a group and will most likely employ coercive tactics to spur a group into action. Resultantly, some authors contend that power is "the capacity to act" and

authority “the right to do so” (Hague and Harrop, 2004: 13; Schaefer and Lamm, 1992: 453; Vander Zanden, 1979: 502). In other words the capacity to act comes from the premise that the leader has the authority to act by virtue of having the legitimacy and support to do so.

Mabutla (6 and 7 April 2001: 6) is in agreement regarding the relationship between authority and legitimacy as mentioned above and says that “authority involves the legitimacy of the power to give commands which are governed by rules that are rationally established by enactment or, by agreement or by imposition”. However, a slight contradiction emerges between Batesman and Snell (1999 and 2000) as well as Hague and Harrop (2004) on the one hand and Mabutla on the other regarding the nexus between authority and legitimacy. Where the former speak of the right to act, Mabutla refers to the temptation from leaders to impose rules. The statement below by Hague and Harrop (2004: 15) is a case in point as they argue that:

A legitimate system of government is one based on authority:
that is, those subject to its rule recognize its right to make
decisions.

From Mabutla’s contention the current researcher finds that the imposition of rules deprives such a leader of the overall legitimacy to act according to the rules that have been set. On the other hand it indicates that the subordinates are bound to respect the law and the decision-making process that accompanies the legitimacy and authority of the leader, regardless of the nature of the position held by such a leader. Alternatively though, a legitimate leader becomes mindful of the support from the subjects during decision-making, lest legitimacy and authority get compromised by the descent to authoritarianism. The common thread that runs between these authors is also found in *Collins Cobuild’s Dictionary* (1989: 47) which defines authority as “the right to command and control other people”. In support of this *Longman’s Dictionary* (1987: 59) defines authority as “the position that gives... the ability, power or right to control or command”.

Furthermore, while *Collins Cobuild's* (1989: 598) defines legitimacy "as that which is correct or allowable according to the law", *Longman's Dictionary* (1987: 447) explains it as something which "is reasonable and acceptable, allowed or justified by law". In support of the above Roskin, Cord, Medeiros and Jones (1994: 6) opine that legitimacy rests on what they also call "the Consent of the Governed": respect for and acceptance of a government. Thus, these sources flow in the same vein as Hague and Harrop (2004: 13), Johnson (1981: 218) and Giddens (1993: 369, 371, 756) regarding legitimacy and weighs into the difference between power and authority. Therefore, where power lacks the element of legitimacy, authority is qualified by it, thus making legitimacy the trump card that differentiates between 'power' and 'authority'.

Shaw (1981: 321-24, 331-335), Batesman and Snell (1999: 385, 412 and 2002: 307, 388, 413, 423, 307, 423) further accentuate the above by contending that legitimacy is only assured by the willingness of the subjects to give the leader support and by the manner in which a leader attained his or her position. Roskin, Cord, Medeiros and Jones (1994: 6) as well as Schaefer and Lamm (1992: 454) further contend that the obligation of the people to obey their leader by virtue of the legitimate power of office is what mainly determines authority. In the same vein this means that such a leader has been recognized as such and therefore enjoys the respect of his/her subordinates. In the final analysis, this means that having power as a leader does not mean that the individual has either the legitimacy or the authority over his subordinates. Where power is applied through coercive measures, authority is regarded as voluntary compliance with the objectives of the leader (Hague and Harrop, 2004: 14; Cartwright, 1983: 288; Schraeder and Lamm, 1992: 64; Mabutla, 6 and 7 April 2001: 4-6). The preceding statement is made more concrete by Johnson (1981: 221) below:

Authority creates its own power so long as people accept that the authority figure has the right to make decisions.

The discussion above attempts to show the nexus between power and politics. In addition, the discussion goes to lengths to caution how easily it can be to fall into a trap of equating power with authority. Although, authority can also be associated with

politics, its most important attribute is legitimacy which is apparently non-existent in as far as the concept power is concerned. Importantly though one has to note that however differently power and authority are explained, they are both related to ruling. Where power is regarded as the ability of the ruler to serve and exploit the subjects, authority is the right to exercise power or to rule (Schaefer and Lamm, 1992: 454; Vander Zanden, 1979: 502).

It flows from the above discussions that where authority is empowered by legitimacy, power enforces legitimacy where it is lacking. This is where an element of legitimised influence comes to the fore because it apparently resides in authority: leadership power and influence. It is for this reason that Van Zyl, Dalglish, Du Plessis, Lues and Pietersen (2009: 197) mention that leadership power seems to be important because it determines the control and distribution of resources. The current researcher opines that such power creates patronage and reduces the importance of checks-and-balances even in the context of *vuhosi*. In support of this assertion Schraeder (2000: 141-143) supports this by saying that where legitimacy underpins authority there are checks-and-balances. As such the current researcher argues that leadership power may not necessarily be influential as it will be an imposition. Leadership which is influential should have authority and thus be legitimate. Van Zyl, Dalglish, Du Plessis, Lues and Pietersen (2009: 199) aver that power relates to the potential capacity to influence. These authors further claim that influence is the ability to “communicate ideas and solicit support or buy-in from subordinates/ followers for these ideas”. However, the current researcher argues that where power is the ultimate there is absence of ‘soliciting support’ as there is no space for decision-making by the subordinates as a result of imposition. In the words of Van Zyl, Dalglish, Du Plessis, Lues and Pietersen (2009: 202) the situation is “tantamount to coercive power...where application is both immediate, certain and consistent... because it is based on fear”. It is from this premise that a discussion on the nature of African traditional leadership and authority is befitting before engaging in the discussion on the nature of *vuhosi* of Vhavenda, its authority and institutions.

1.4.3 Traditional polities and the nature of traditional leadership

According to Delius, Maggs and Schoeman (2014), African polities owe their existence to specific *vhuhosi* founded on subjects of diverse origins, united by allegiance to a particular ruling lineage instead of kinship. These were dynamic political formations born out of splits emanating from succession struggles when competing *mahosi* and/or even brothers, fought for the throne during succession (Ralushai, 1979). In this regard, Van Warmelo (1935), Stayt (1968), Khangala (1999), Fokwang (2003), McNeill (2011) and Nemudzivhaḁi (1977 and 2017) cite Mphephu, Tshivhase, Ravhura, Sinthumule, Kutama, Nthabalala and Davhana, the descendants of the legendary Ṭhohoyandḁou and Makhado, as stark reminders of splits borne out of succession disputes and internecine warfare which saw the disintegration of the Ramabulana kingdom; this after brothers declared themselves independent of each other. The trend continued when colonial authorities created and even recognized people such as Sinthumule, Kutama, Davhana and Rammbuḁa as independent *mahosi* in their own right (Khangala, 1999; Fokwang, 2003; McNeill (2011) Fouché-Grobler, 2005), regardless of their hailing from junior houses.

Delius, Maggs and Schoeman (2014) further indicate that the splits affected the source of power of leaders whereas in essence the ability of powerful leaders and groups to offer protection in turbulent and dangerous times initially attracted adherents, and swelled the size of communities. For example, after the split among Ṭhohoyandḁou's progenies, the Mphephus were the largest and most powerful group, followed by the Tshivhase and Mphaphuli groups in that order; meaning that most of Vhavenda royal families are strangely related to one another with each dynasty assuming a name of a breakaway *khosi*: *vha Ha*-Mphephu (people of Mphephu), -Tshivhase, -Sinthumule, -Rammbuḁa, -Mugivhi, -Netsianda, -Davhana and -Kutama (Van Warmelo, 1935; Fouché-Grobler, 2005; Kirkaldy, 2004). Logically, acquainting oneself with the history of *vhuhosi* is essential in attempting to understand its nature, role and functions: dispute resolution within the community, administration of justice through customary courts, carrying out traditional and other ceremonial functions, land administration such as subdivision of land into smaller areas for administrative and economic purposes, custodianship of culture, customs and tradition (Former Congress of Traditional Leaders of South Africa (CONTRALESA) President, *Inkosi* (senior

traditional leader) Phatekile Holomisa, as quoted in “Traditional Leaders: A Kwazulu-Natal Study, 1991 to 2001” (2001).

1.4.4 Ethnicity and ethnic identity

Young and Bagley (1979) contend that no study on political evolution can afford to avoid discussing the difficult problem of “tribalism” and/or “ethnicity”. It is in this regard that Schraeder (2000) asserts that ethnicity defines a sense of collective identity in which people believe that they share a common historical past, social norms and customs, among others. The author further avers that ethnic groups are divided into sub-group identities and loyalties called clans which trace a common lineage for many years to a specific founding member or ruling family dynasty.

To add logic to this assertion, Modiba (2016) mentions the typical operational features of colonialism on the African continent, where colonial powers allegedly predicated on creating divisions among the various ethnic linguistic groups through their manipulation and reinforcing a “myth-symbol complex”. The author posits that this became a determinant factor in accounting for ethnic politics as the concept was used, misused, abused and manipulated at the altar of political expediency. According to Modiba (2016) ethnicity or ethnic identity has played a very critical role in shaping the socio-political lives of many African people because it is the way in which people identify themselves, whereas some have even accepted to live among, and adapt to being under particular ethnic groups.

1.4.5 The relationship between the church and state

Halala (2011) writes on the response of Vatsonga during the process of conversion to Christianity by the Swiss Missionaries. In his discussion, the author exposes the relationship between *mahosi/tihosi* (Tsonga equivalent of senior traditional leaders) and community life *vis-à-vis* the activities of the missionaries during conversion and how this influenced Vatsonga’s socio-political and economic life. The author also makes reference of the dominance of the Lutheran and Dutch Reformed Missionaries on the lives of Vhavenḁa and Bapedi, while the Swiss Missionaries impacted on

Vatsonga/Shangaan. The author says that this defined their support of apartheid ethnic politics and assisted in ensuring effective administration of black South Africans and thus lay a basis for 'divide and rule' homeland politics. Khorommbi³ (2001) quotes Watt (1992) who states that "it was believed that Black people would be brought to liberation from political and economic oppression through the gospel...coming back to God, Blacks would be prepared for nationhood and political power." In the words of Jeannerat (2007) "...religion on the Soutpansberg... is defined by a quest for origins and ethnic essence." Therefore, it cannot be ignored that conversion was used as a *raison de'tre* for the ethnic based 'we' and 'them' ideology in the quest to assist the colonial and/later the apartheid policy-making process.

1.4.6 The nature of power relations within South Africa's ethnic homeland or Bantustan policy

Bank and Southall (1996) as well as Williams (2010) allude to the legal aspect of power relations between *mahosi* and the state. These authors opine that power relations between the government and traditional leaders were crucial for rural administration. They further argue that indigenous law and customs were subverted in order to promote the interests of white minority control and rule over ethnic groups as judicial powers of traditional leaders were undermined and eroded. In the same vein, power relations between the African National Congress (ANC) and *mahosi* during negotiations for a democratic South Africa and after, were such that "the responsibilities and powers ascribed to traditional leaders were considerably less than their representatives had lobbied for during the process of constitutional negotiations" (Jara, 2009: 13). Thus, in South Africa the functions and role of *mahosi* assumed ambiguous proportions, but *alas* remaining significant for political expediency at any given point in time.

³ The late Pastor Ndwambi Lawrence Khorommbi is the founder of Charis Missionary Church in Makwarela, Ṭhohoyang̣ou.

1.4.7 The challenge to the legitimacy of Vhavenda traditional leadership

The challenge to the legitimacy of *vhuhosi* of Vhavenda emanated during the homeland era when some illegitimate *mahosi* were appointed in the place of legitimate heirs, or even elevated from *vhugota* (headmanship) to *vhuhosi* in the name of patronage (Nemudzivhadi, 1977 and 2017; Oomen, 2005). The flipside was that legitimate heirs were demoted for being opponents of the system (Dangale, 1993). In the Tshivhase territory, for example, the unrelenting regency of one John Shavhani Tshivhase, an uncle of the current *Khosi* Midiyavhathu Prince Kennedy, was supported by the then Minister of Local Government and Traditional Affairs in the homeland, Alidzulwi Alfred Tshivhase (also known as A.A.) to power-hungrily stay glued to the throne. This proved invidious to the majority of subjects and invoked their wrath (Khangala, 1999). Even headmen under Tshivhase Traditional Authority became divided on the issue, leading to a challenge to legitimacy (Dangale, 1993; Khangala, 1999). Other such examples will be discussed later in the study.

Be that as it may the release in 1989 of Walter Sisulu, Raymond Mhlaba, Andrew Mlangeni and other political leaders of the ANC late in 1989, emboldened Midiyavhathu Kennedy Tshivhase's subjects, and other Vhavenda people to challenge the legitimacy of the homeland system and its leadership. The emergence of militant groups such as the United Democratic Front (UDF), Mass Democratic Movement (MDM), Northern Transvaal Youth Congress (NOTYCO) and the South African Youth Organization (SAYO), among others, played a significant role in this regard. Ironically, these political forces emerged within the oppressive atmosphere of apartheid and/or homeland politics (Khangala, 1999; Khorombi, 2001; Kgatla, 2016).

1.4.8 The influence of modern bureaucracy and modern economy

Hartman, Kriel, Boonzaaier, Els and Wassermann (1993) refer to financial resources of tribal authorities in the Gazankulu homeland as mainly dependent on the collection and administration of taxes by tribal authorities in terms of Government Notice 939 of 1953. As a result, Khangala (1990) notes that traditional life gradually became dependent on the government for income as *mahosi* lost control of rural economic

administration of which the land was the backbone. It is this author's invocation that the aforementioned changing politico-administrative dynamics forced heads-of-family and young men to join the labour market. The author further claims that this gave rise to patronage because *magota*, businessmen and the semi-illiterate represented people in the homeland parliament. Maṭhagu (1990) and Fouché-Grobler (2005) also refer to the transition from subsistent to modern economy and how it transformed the formerly rural community, which was closely tied to *vuhosi* institution, and economic changes tied to the provision of government revenue and household income, instead of subsistent cultivation.

1.5 Role of Theory in the Study

This study is underpinned by Afrocentricity (also called Afrocentric theory) which was pioneered by Asante (2003). Central to the tenets of Afrocentricity is grounding, orientation and perspective; the tenets to be applied as the analytical categories of the study. The study also draws from the works of other Afrocentric scholars such as Modupe (2003), Mazama (2003), Halala (2011) and Shai (2016), among others. The choice of Afrocentricity as a theoretical lens for this study is informed by the fact that much of the literature in History, Political Science and other cognate disciplines which is related to the theme of this study is based on theories, concepts, philosophies and ideas that are rooted within the Eurocentric/Westernised and Afrikaner Nationalist worldview, as already alluded to in the research problem. However, Afrocentricity does not wholly reject the utility value of other Western theories in the knowledge industry but it challenges their falsified universal applicability and dominance, especially on issues that affected black South Africans, and *vuhosi* of Vhavenda and institutions in particular. Therefore, Afrocentricity is presented as the theory that has the propensity of providing an alternative perspective on the erstwhile homeland policy and *vuhosi* of Vhavenda.

1.6 Purpose of the Study

1.6.1 Aim of the study

The aim of the study is to explore South Africa's Homeland Policy with specific reference to Vhavenda Traditional Leadership and Institutions (1898-1994), from an Afrocentric perspective. Therefore in order to work towards achieving this aim, the research objectives below have been identified.

1.6.2 Research objectives

- To describe the nature of the relationship between the South African government and *vuhosi* of Vhavenda on the eve of homeland policy;
- To analyse the development of ethnicity *vis-à-vis* the influence of ethnic identity during the period surrounding the establishment of Vhavenda homeland;
- To describe the changing power relations between the South African government and *mahosi* within the Venda homeland;
- To examine the impact of Vhavenda homeland policy on the internal relations among *mahosi* of Vhavenda;
- To examine the impact of homeland policy on Vhavenda cultural conception of royalty and governance.

1.7 Research Methodology

The study fits within the realm of the qualitative research methodology underpinned by Afrocentric exploration. This is because the current researcher builds a complex and holistic picture as well as analyse words and detailed views in a natural setting. This premise must be understood within the context that the nature of the study deals with "an enquiry process of understanding social human problems, based on building a complex, holistic picture, formed with words, reporting detailed views of informants, and conducted in a natural setting" (Creswell, 1998: 2; De Vos, Strydom, Fouché and Delport, 2011: 13, 18; Bailey, 1987: 291, 332; Grbich 2007; Wisker 2012; Creswell, 2014; Neuman, 2014; Mangani, 2016; Modiba, 2016).

1.7.1 Research Design

The study assumes a case study research design grounded in Afrocentricity. This is because the current researcher employs Venda as a case study to explore and in order to understand the evolution, practice and institution of traditional leadership in the rural communities of South Africa and Africa as a whole. This must be considered in the context that although colonialism was universal for the entire African continent, the homeland policy was unique for South Africa as an administrative policy for black South Africans, and for *vhuhosi* of Vhavenda and institutions in particular.

1.7.2 Sampling

De Vos, Strydom, Fouché and Delport (2011: 390-391) remind us that in qualitative research sampling is less structured largely because of the methods of data collection: observation and interviewing and “...that there are no rules for sample size in qualitative enquiry... because the process is undertaken after the actual investigation has commenced.” It is for this reason that the authors remind us that the definition of sample does not say that “the sample drawn is in fact representative” but that the sample taken is “*considered to be representative*” (2012: 223).

Flowing from the above the study has employed purposive sampling. Therefore, the population of the proposed study would entail *mahosi*, former ministers and government officials in the Venda homeland, activists, students, academics, the general populace and religious leaders. Without intending to cast figures in stone regarding the number of potential participants at that point in time, the current researcher was able to engage an estimated 28 (twenty-eight) individuals who were interviewed; this depending on their availability given the possibility of some having already passed on. However, the current researcher interacted with as diverse participants as possible to enrich the end-product of the study.

1.7.3 Data Collection

The study relies on the use of primary and secondary sources of information on the apartheid homeland policy from a variety of disciplines. Primary sources consulted include archival material, government circulars, legislation, minutes of meetings and diaries (where possible), official reports, letters and other correspondences. Secondary sources used include books, journal articles, manuscripts, theses and/or dissertations, internet material and newspapers. The primary and secondary sources were identified per discipline, the relevance of their scope to the study and the influence of the period they cover; hence the need for a critical approach in this regard. The above-mentioned sources of data were complemented by oral interviews, and where applicable, qualitative audio and/ or visual materials. Oral history helps us to balance the sources much as written sources depend so much on experiences, situations and time, such that a critical approach is necessary as one interview differs from person to person (Presentation by Prof. R.R. Molapo⁴ at the Oral History Workshop, University of Venda, 2002-09-02).

However, seeing that the study consulted a diverse population when sampling, where necessary focus group interviews were employed under certain circumstances; for example when interviewing *mahosi* who reside in villages or areas in close proximity of each other. This assisted in either confirming the credibility of data collected and/or allow differing views and thus enrich the nature of critique in the final report. In this regard the importance of the use of language is addressed in the section on “Ethical Considerations”.

1.7.4 Data Analysis

According to Shai (63: 2016) Afrocentric research must be located and grounded in the culture, ideals, religion, history, among other aspects, of the African and African-Diasporan peoples through orientation and location to Afrocentricity. Therefore data analysis was underpinned by principles of the Afrocentric method as espoused in the

⁴ Professor Rachidi Richard Molapo is/ was senior lecturer and HOD in the Department of History at the University of Venda.

research problem of this study. Bailey (1987: 32), Grbich (2007: 17) and Wisker (2012: 172) refer to specific guidelines based on particular principles that govern the overall approach to the research process, from the theoretical underpinnings of data collection and data analysis referred to as *methodology*. Furthermore, the study assumes Neuman's (2014: 507) counsel that in qualitative studies of this nature data analysis commences during the process of data collection. However, this author cautions that such analysis only involves the identification and interpretation of relevant information such that at this stage the research process would be tentative and incomplete. Regardless of this, the study adopted a blend of thematic content analysis (TCA) and discourse analysis in its broadest form as this allows for an in-depth interpretation of data. Neuman (2014: 507) further corroborates Creswell's (2014: 196-200) view that in research we analyse by systematically organising data into categories, reading, coding and recoding, where necessary, examining, integrating and interpreting it while searching for patterns and relationships among specific details, connecting particular data to concepts, advance generalisations and identify broad trends.

1.7.5 Quality Criteria

Babbie and Mouton (2010: 274) remind the researcher of the essence of reliability, objectivity and validity in qualitative research if the study is to achieve *trustworthiness* in its findings. Furthermore, these authors assert that "...objectivity means doing justice to the object of the study...that the key criterion of good qualitative research is found in the notion of *trustworthiness*..." (Babbie and Mouton, 2010: 274-276). It is in this context that these authors lay emphasis on four interlinked concepts that guide the researcher in ensuring *trustworthiness*: *credibility*, *transferability*, *dependability* and *confirmability*. In their words: "...a qualitative study cannot be *transferable* unless it is *credible*, and it cannot be deemed *credible* unless it is *dependable* (Babbie and Mouton 2010: 2077). It is for this reason that the researcher has to be as more intensive and involved in the research process as possible by adopting different ways of interpreting data, engage in constant and tentative analysis, and by being more critical to what is important and what is not important to the study.

(a) Credibility

Following from the above the element of objectivity is of utmost importance to achieve *credibility*. This depended largely on the ability of the current researcher to accurately identify and engage in extensive data collection. In this instance, the *credibility* of primary and secondary data was of essence. In the same vein, collecting oral evidence through the interview method, must be guided by how adequately the researcher considers the significance of population and the theoretical framework on which the study is grounded. Therefore, there was a need to adopt a balancing act between word of mouth and written material throughout this journey of research.

(b) Transferability

Transferability refers to the extent to which the findings can be applied in other contexts or with other respondents. In this regard Babbie and Mouton (2010: 277) remind us that while agreeing to the importance of *transferability*, it is important to accept that “knowledge gained from one context” does not necessarily have “relevance for other contexts in another time frame”. In this study it was necessary to consider the nature of sampling to be employed: purposive sampling. While admitting, as mentioned above that the study does a balancing act between identifying and using oral and written material, it was of utmost importance to acknowledge that “...the obligation for demonstrating *transferability* rests on those who wish to apply it to the receiving context: the reader of the findings (Babbie and Mouton, 2010: 277).

(c) Dependability

Based on the above, how objectively the researcher refers to and uses the data enhances its *dependability* while sticking to its *credibility*. In other words the *dependability* of the study should be judged by its *credibility*. Therefore subjecting one to peer-review is of utmost importance as part of the research process. This greatly adds to the reliability of the study and its findings while reducing the temptation of bias and subjectivity. In this instance the findings of the study must be supported by the data used while the study as a whole must be internally coherent in its interpretation and findings (De Vos, Strydom, Fouché and Delpont (2011: 426-428).

(d) Confirmability

According to De Vos, Strydom, Fouché and Delport (2011: 426-428) *confirmability* refers to whether the findings of the study by one researcher can be confirmed by another, while using the data collected to evaluate the study. In echoing this, Babbie and Mouton (2010: 278) aver that this can happen if a study, and by implication its findings, can be used to determine *dependability* and *confirmability* simultaneously. Therefore it is the responsibility of the researcher to ensure that the findings of the study stick to its aim and objectives by putting them to the test and by avoiding biases.

1.8 Significance of the Study

Firstly, this study is poised to add to the body of knowledge in History, Political Science and other cognate disciplines. Secondly, and in particular, the study hopes to enhance public and academic discourse about the homeland policy and the establishment of the defunct Vhavenda homeland. Thirdly, the current researcher believes that this study has a potential to [re]present and preserve the historicity, culture and tradition of Vhavenda. Fourthly, this study is well-positioned to provide an alternative passage for understanding the political institutions and heritage of Vhavenda and black South Africans in general. Lastly, the current researcher hopes that this study serves as a stepping stone for future research on the nexus between apartheid South Africa's homeland policy and *vuhosi*.

1.9. Ethical Considerations

The study was be conducted within the confines of the following established ethical principles:

1.9.1 Ethical clearance to conduct the study

The current researcher applied for ethical clearance and was granted permission by the Turfloop Research Ethics Committee (TREC) to conduct the study. See appendices

1.9.2 Voluntary participation and informed consent

The current researcher was committed to respecting voluntary participation of affected parties to the research process. The purpose of the study and benefits (if there were any) to either the current researcher or the participants were made transparent to the latter before any interview took place. The participants' right to terminate their participation in the study at any given time was affirmed beforehand (De Vos, Strydom, Fouché and Delpont, 2011).

1.9.3 Avoiding harm

Caution was taken by the current researcher to avoid any form of harm to the participants of the proposed study. Those who by any chance or by accident were afraid of incurring emotional harm, or the other, were promised referral for professional assistance in the event such instances arose (Babbie and Mouton, 2010).

1.9.4 Anonymity and confidentiality

In instances wherein the participant did not grant permission for his/her identity to be revealed during report writing, the current researcher was prepared to resort to the use of pseudo names, which situation fortunately did not occur. Relatedly, the data generated for this study was only used for academic purposes and under no circumstance was raw data shared with a third party.

1.9.5 Plagiarism

The current researcher avoided all forms of bias and cited all the sources that were consulted and they appear in the reference list if they were utilized (Neuman, 2014).

1.9.6 Language

Seeing that this study involved oral interaction with *mahosi*, as mentioned in the data collection section, the current researcher took into consideration the language issue

as some of *mahosi* found themselves comfortable in interacting in Tshivenda rather than in English. In this regard a bilingual interview guide was prepared, in English and Tshivenda. The objective of the current researcher was to afford those who were either not comfortable with English or were not literate in the language to make oral information available in Tshivenda with much factual ease. Accompanying the interview guide is a bilingual consent letter to afford potential participants an opportunity to understand conditions of their contribution in the proposed study.

1.9.7 Respect and dignity

Respect and dignity of the participants was ensured by duly valuing their voluntary participation and regarding their culture, tradition, political institutions and heritage as sacrosanct. Central to this the current researcher avoided asking participants leading or badgering questions. Therefore the participants were acknowledged as collaborators by respecting their privacy, anonymity, confidentiality, their appropriate consent as well as by protecting their rights and welfare as participants in the research process for a quality research product.

Chapter 2

The Nature of the Relationship between the South African Government and Traditional Leadership with Specific Reference to *Vhuhosi* of Vhavenda on the Eve of Apartheid

2.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the nature of the relationship between the South African government and *vhuhosi* (traditional leadership) with specific reference to that of Vhavenda on the eve of apartheid. However, in order to get the context thereof it is essential for the current researcher to take a glimpse at the nature of *vhuhosi* in Africa in general before the dawn of colonialism; which is the precursor of apartheid. This is done without falling into the trap of embarking into a comparative approach, which is not the focus of this particular study, but rather with an attempt to show the change in the nature of *vhuhosi* overtime from precolonial times to the dawn of colonialism. In other words the discussion on the nature of *vhuhosi* of the precolonial era is meant to set the tone of the discussion of this chapter, more so because long before the dawn of colonialism communities saw themselves as a people under the leadership of a particular individual rather than what colonial powers referred to as ‘tribe’⁵ (Delius, Maggs and Schoeman, 2014: 45). In the same vein Hammond-Tooke (1974: 79-80) mentions that Venda history turns out to be family or clan history such that personal names of rulers “are not used to distinguish tribes”, but a people: Vha Ha-Mphaphuli (the people of Mphaphuli) or Vha Lwamondo (the people of Lwamondo).

⁵ The concept ‘tribe’ is a colonial invention and fits into the Eurocentric lexicon. The current researcher avoids using it in its raw form as it is problematic and does not fit into an Afrocentric discourse as it is, so is the ‘ethnic’, unless if they are approached from a critical point of view. For this reason the current researcher uses these concepts, and others related to them, such as ‘tribal structure’ and ‘tribal division’, among others, by depicting them in inverted commas as it will be seen later in the study. See also pages 33-34, 37 and 82 as well as footnote number 22. The *ethnic* is also depicted in italics where applicable.

Regardless of this in most cases resistance against colonial conquest was led by such individuals as it happened during the period of Dingaan, Makhado and Sekhukhune, to mention a few. This study attempts to show that such resistance by these individual historical figures in their own right defined the nature of relationships between *mahosi* and the white authorities. However, the coming of colonialism to these shores saw a change of which, reminiscent of this, Fick⁶ (*Mail and Guardian*, July 13 to 19, 2018: 34) reminds us that the reconfiguration of the 19th century anti-colonial 'tribal' resistance- ironically constructed in nationalist terms- became the terms that anti-apartheid liberation movements had to abjure. According to Fick black-nationalism (which was foreign to Africans before the dawn of colonialism) was meant to cut across the divisions that colonial conquest and apartheid policy had used to divide the subjugated indigenes in South Africa. In essence by the time of the legislation of apartheid the powerful figures mentioned above had either perished, had been conquered and subjugated, or their ancestors turned into collaborators of the colonial powers; hence they could not offer much resistance to the indiscriminate encroachment of imperial forces. In the same vein Fick (July 13 to 19, 2018: 34) borrows an argument from writer Bessie Head who mentions that the significance of 'race' in the distribution of power and resources in South Africa and the definition and history of 'race', and ethnicity, as figured in South African history, are inextricably linked to colonial conquest, subjugation and control: other key concepts of this study as they hopefully define the nature of the relationship between *vhuhosi* and the South African government on the eve of apartheid.

2.1.1 African traditional leadership and authority: from pre-colonial times to the colonial period

This section discusses the nature of African traditional leadership and authority as a prequel to its equivalence of *vhuhosi* of Vhavenda and authority which is essential before embarking on an explanation of Vhavenda hierarchical concepts. The current researcher departs from an understanding that African traditional authority is

⁶ Angelo Fick is/ was the Director of Research at the Auwal Socio-economic Research Institute. He teaches at universities on questions of culture and publishes on *eNCA.com*.

encapsulated within indigenous institutions of which, in South African context, the foundation is “African values of humanness generally referred to as ‘*ubuntu*’ in isiZulu” (Interview with Professor Stella Nkomo, Executive Director, Unisa School of Business Leadership (USBL), “SABC2 Africa ‘180 Degrees’ Programme”, 14th September 2006). From this premise Gyekye supports Nkomo’s assertion by describing the value and importance of African traditional leadership and authority thus, as quoted by Senyonjo, at

[http://www.feredo.com/Pages/Traditional Institutions and Land.htm](http://www.feredo.com/Pages/Traditional%20Institutions%20and%20Land.htm), 12):

Tradition is any cultural product that was created or pursued, in the whole or in part, by the past generations and that, having been accepted and preserved, in the whole or in part, by successive generations, has been maintained to the present.

In addition, Senyonjo takes this opportunity to further argue that it is through attempting to understand that the concept which is referred to as “traditional is ‘something done or respected according to custom from generation to generation’” that one will understand traditional leadership and authority (at [http://www.feredo.com/Pages/Traditional Institutions and Land.htm](http://www.feredo.com/Pages/Traditional%20Institutions%20and%20Land.htm), also quoted from Lule, whose article appears at <http://www.federero.com/Pages/Role%20Of%20Traditional%20Rulers.htm>, 12). Thus Senyonjo and Gyekye are in unison in their explanation of the nature and significance of traditional leadership and its respective authority. Senyonjo further emphasizes the previous assertions thus:

Traditional leaders are the guardians of the traditional norms that are respected in particular communities from generation to generation.

In addition to the above more authors uniformly define traditional authority as that which resides in the institution of traditional leadership or, in simple terms, that which resides in traditional leadership which is attained, be it through succession or through conquest of other polities (Mashele, 2002: 11; Vander Zanden, 1979: 503; Schaefer

and Lamm, 1992: 455; Myburgh, 1981: 79-80; Mönnig, 1967: 249-250; Tötemeyer, 1978: 9-10; "Traditional leadership in Africa: A research report on traditional systems of administration and their role in the promotion of good governance, Institute of Local Governance and Development, Commonwealth Local Government Forum (ILGD/CLGF, 1998: 18; Brookes, 1953: 153; Ajayi, 1992: 126; Anene and Brown, 1966: 343). In this context it is unimaginable to escape the fact that traditional authority is generally associated with the concept of power rather than authority. It is from this premise that in contrast to power which is closely tied to coercion, authority is understood in the context of legitimacy. In this instance the "key factor is general acceptance" of the hereditary position or status and authority to rule based on the long-held customs and traditions that are accepted unquestioningly, which is not interpreted as coercion (Ajayi, 1992: 126; Johnson, 1981: 215; Mönnig, 1967: 249; "Traditional leadership in Africa", 1998: 18; Maloka, 1995: 35-43; Stuchlik, 1968: 18; Boonzaaier and Sharp, 1988: 49; Daphne, 1982, 1). Nnōli (1995: 88) enhances the previous explanation on traditional authority by saying that:

Traditional authority is that hierarchical structure of power whose major claim for existence is that it has come down to the present from the past and, therefore, conforms to the customs and traditions of the people. In this regard there is usually no need to discuss and agree on ways and means of organizing state power.

In the same vein the above sends a message that traditional leadership and authority is above questioning and that the power vested in it is based on the general acceptance of the long held and existing laws and is thus an imposition. The assertion that flows from this is that traditional authority is absolute in nature and thus lacks legitimacy. However, Mair (1972: 128; Beattie, 1989: 157-158; Boonzaaier and Sharp, 1988: 49; Anene and Brown, 1966: 344; Daphne, 1982: 1) aver that the nature of traditional leadership and authority allows for the delegation and/ or devolution of responsibilities based on the general acceptance of its existence, as it functions with and within a council-of-traditional leaders: which council is accorded a degree of participation thereby giving it a degree of legitimacy and credence. Heywood (2004: 141) concretises this assertion by averring that legitimacy is usually simply defined as

“rightfulness” such that it is crucial to have a distinction between power and authority. Heywood (2004: 141) further asserts that legitimacy is the quality that transforms naked power into rightful authority. It flows from above that authority is acknowledged out of duty rather than fear; thus authority exists through legitimacy such that the two concepts are rightly politically juxtaposed.

Consequently, legitimacy is explained by a number of authors based on the Weberian approach of looking at the concept. The explanation given below attempts to form a link between traditional authority and legitimacy by using the distinctions that come from Weber. In this regard legitimacy is divided into three categories according to Birch (1993: 125-126), Mashele (2002: 11), Ng’oma, (2005: 9) and Daphne (1982: 1):

- (d) **Traditional legitimacy:** is the one which is generally enjoyed by ‘tribal chiefs’ or traditional leaders and comprises princes, princesses and kings. This legitimacy relies mostly on the personal loyalty of the subordinates to the ‘chief’, the king or the ruling family in order to comply with the laws and orders of the government.
- (e) **Legal-rational legitimacy:** is associated with modern states or governments. In this case the state or government is the one which enjoys loyalty from the citizens, and not the individual. In addition compliance with law and order is enforced by the state and not the individual.
- (f) **Charismatic legitimacy:** derives from the individual qualities of a political leader. In this case one thinks of such qualities as integrity, kindness and the inspiration of such a leader for his followers to accept him/her.

From the definitions of legitimacy given above it becomes clear that the type of legitimacy that is most relevant to African traditional authority is ‘traditional legitimacy’. The definition of traditional legitimacy evidently carries all the hallmarks of the institution of African traditional leadership within which traditional authority resides. The previous statement also relates to the claim that traditional legitimacy is derived from the acceptance of the hereditary nature of the power of traditional leadership, long held traditions, practices and beliefs (Mashele, 2003: 11; Johnson, 1981: 220-

221; Ajayi, 1992: 125-126; Nnōli, 1995: 88; Ng'oma, 2005: 9; Daphne, 1982: 1; Töttemeyer, 1978: 9; Myburgh, 1981: 80).

During the pre-colonial period, African political authority was vested in traditional leadership wherein political and social organization were based on the 'tribal structure', meaning that the organisation of the political unit was inseparable from or was consistent with its social aspect (Mönnig, 1967: 249-250; Mair, 1972: 124; Marks and Rathbone, 1987: 168-172; Anene and Brown, 1966: 344). In the same vein Myburgh (1981: 78), Mahosi (2000: 1-3), Anene and Brown (1966: 344) view political organisation as administration of public affairs, the establishment or maintenance of order or traditionally ordered relation and the cultural aspect of which administration is the purpose. From the above it flows that traditional authority encompasses the social, political, traditional and cultural aspects, to mention a few. To further give credence to these assertions Mashele (2002: 4), Mashele (2003: 1), Mönnig (1967: 249-250), Mair (1972: 124-127), Balandier (1972: 96) and Davidson (1992: 69-70) agree that within African polities there was no other authority above traditional leaders. According to Mashele (2002: 4) and Mashele (2003: 1) traditional authority not only dealt with political and social organisation in the regulation of public affairs, establishment and maintenance of order but upheld the cultural aspect of the society. Mashele further avers that traditional authority resided in traditional leadership which had the ultimate power as there was no other authority above it, except the council-of-traditional-leaders that serve(ed) as checks-and-balances. Thus, by virtue of being the highest institution, traditional authority made all the important socio-political and cultural administrative decisions on behalf of the subjects.

This statement paints a picture of a socio-political system that was not democratic in nature as authority was vested in the individual. It is a well-considered view of this researcher that the perceived emphasis on individualism in systems is partially in opposition to its foundation, which is the African value system that is premised on virtues of communalism and interdependence. Understandably, the grim picture painted of this political system may be supported by the assertion that traditionally there was no separation of legislative, executive and judicial organs of administration (Daphne, 1982: 1; Mönnig, 1967: 249-50; Fortes and Evans-Pritchard, 1946: 38-39;

Anene and Brown, 1966: 343-344). This impression is concretised by the fact that the central administration or governance of African people was based on the ruling family with the traditional leader or king as the political, social, judicial and religious head, meaning that he had wide-ranging powers as the highest authority (Mashele, 2003: 4; Myburgh, 1981: 80-82; Beattie, 1989: 153, 167-169; Fortes and Evans-Pritchard, 1946: 33, 34 and 38; Ayittey, 1992: 38-45; Kotzé, 1974: 66; Boonzaaier and Sharp, 1988: 49). Consequently, everything was decided by the highest authority in the form of an individual, the traditional leader. This socio-political arrangement has led to sources regarding traditional authority as being highly undemocratic in nature (Mashele, 2002: 11-20). The above discussion is further accentuated by the passages that follow below from Senyonjo at [http://www.feredo.com/Pages/Traditional Institutions and Land.htm](http://www.feredo.com/Pages/Traditional_Institutions_and_Land.htm), 12):

Various people are adverse to traditional institutions for a variety of reasons: some see them as backward instruments of social oppression and lack of progress, in such areas as political organization, women's rights, social mobility, and economic rights.

and

Traditional institutions are seen as instruments of domination or lordship by one social or ethnic group over others.

From these passages the nature of traditional institutions and the methods of their administration and governance might have been influenced by historical experiences, conditions, the period during which they existed and later the manner in which these institutions were misused or abused to achieve colonial and apartheid objectives. It is worthwhile to note that some traditional systems, like those in Europe experienced change earlier in their history and were adapted into the modernising socio-political systems much earlier than their African counterparts as a result of industrialisation and the socio-political changes that accompanied these developments. Therefore, one can

argue that the fact that in the African traditional authority resided many roles or responsibilities was equally a result of the histories and experiences that influenced the objectives of numerous studies on these socio-political systems. Regardless of the foregoing observations, it is important to note that at least until the disruption of the African value systems by colonialism and apartheid, African traditional leadership possessed democratic elements. Nevertheless, such systems were not perfect as it is/ was the case with other systems of politically organising the society (Shai and Iroanya, 2014: 912).

In contrast to traditional authorities that had already undergone change when some studies were conducted, the nature of African traditional authorities would appear to be undemocratic and unrepresentative of the will of the people, as indicated by the two quotations above; notwithstanding that other such systems were similarly backward at one point or another. The crux of the matter is that non-African political and economic systems have been wrongly presented as more superior and effective than others (Shai, 2018: 268; Dalglish, Du Plessis, Lules and Pietersen, 2009: 45). However, this must not tempt one to turn a blind eye to the fact that African traditional systems of governance were as much based on the delegation of responsibilities and duties as those of 'modern societies'. As such an attempt to portray African socio-political systems as highly centralized must not necessarily be implied that they were undemocratic in nature. The foregoing analysis should be understood within the context that African political institutions and practices such as traditional leadership can best be understood when measured or looked at through African standards and tools. The failure to conform to this mode of analysis is likely to result in the commission of gross transversal errors (Shai, 2018: 272).

The argument about the undemocratic nature of African traditional authority is apparently based on their hereditary nature, in which the leadership assumed their positions and responsibilities as if hereditary rule never existed elsewhere, especially in Europe: 'the holier than thou'. It would be academically fatal to shy away from the fact that historically each people had cultural practices that were steeped on tradition from time immemorial, and were viewed as traditionally legitimate by virtue of being

generally accepted by the communities over which they ruled: by being passed from generations to generations. However, the fact that in African traditional systems of authority resided the delegation of responsibilities is an indication of open consultation, participation as well as checks-and-balances, if the existence of the council-of-traditional leaders is anything to go by.

Flowing from above, among Vhavenda, for example, the ruler's mother (called *vhakoma*, no equal meaning to *mukoma*, as will be explained later in the chapter) and the ruler's sister (*makhadzi*) are regarded as very important counsellors and/ or councillors (Myburgh, 1985; Jeannerat, 1997; Nethengwe, 2005; Matshidze, 2013). In addition to that they play a very important role during the process of succession (to be discussed later in the study), as sister to the 'chief' or king, when such circumstances arise (arose) after the death of the ruler (Nethengwe, 2005: 170; Van Warmelo, 1940: 35-37; Wessmann, 1900: 13-14; Maselesele, 1990: 3-9, 35-44).

Given the arguments advanced above, it suffices to emphatically say that the coming of Europeans placed the nature of African traditional authorities and institutions at the altar of political expediency. The Europeans inadvertently misused, abused and negatively transformed the institution to achieve their colonial goals thereby making them a shadow of their former self (Ayittey, 1991: 37-42; Tötemeyer, 1988: 9-12; Maloka, 1995: 35-36; Brookes, 1968: 153). The institutions were turned into autocratic dictatorships to promote and consolidate colonial and oppressive policies. Marks and Rathbone (1987: 170) argue that down the years South African history "looked at the transformation of the African societies, especially in the rural areas, from a Marxist inclination".

However, the current researcher would argue that from the outset Europeans were bent on transforming traditional authorities purely for imperial, colonial, paternalistic and hegemonic objectives. In this regard, Magubane (1979: 11) and Halala (2011: 17) advance that the objectives of the white authorities was to ensure the gradual destruction of 'tribal civilisation', ensure the gradual destruction of the traditional

political system as, to the whites, it proved incompatible with 'their' civilisation; hence the African was conquered by force whereupon their conquerors justified their superiority and mystified their victims: the vanquished African masses. Therefore, it is evident from these authors' assertions that Marks and Rathbone's contentions are class influenced because the vanguard of colonial and apartheid policy was fundamentally racially, paternalistically and hegemonic based. Marks and Rathbone appear to be blind to the fact that the changes that affected black South Africans and traditional authority politically had a socio-economic ripple effect as well. The blanket changes that were confined to the issue of race were based on the separation from and domination of one race by another and bore the brunt of these one-sided changes, especially traditional authority. However, this argument does own up to the fact that under colonialism and apartheid the lines between racism and class were blurred, if the argument by Adam (1971: 8, 9, 10) that "race and class were almost synonymous in South Africa" is anything to go by. To further negate earlier assertions, the democratic nature of African traditional authority is enhanced by Nelson Mandela, former ANC and South Africa's first democratically elected President, 1994-1999, as quoted by Ayittey (1993: 37):

Then our people lived peacefully, under the democratic rule of their kings...Then the country was ours, in our name and right...All men were free and equal and this was the foundation of government. The council (of elders) was so completely democratic that all members of the tribe could participate in its deliberations. Chief and subject, warrior and medicine men, all took part and endeavoured to influence its decisions.

The above passage vindicates the existence of participation and consensus that influenced the functioning of traditional authority, over a free people, an indication that 'chiefly' authority is valid insofar as it is the mouthpiece of majority interests. It further suffices to take the assertion by Cureau, Fortes and Evans-Pritchard (1946: 12) as well, who are quoted in Senyonjo (http://www.feredo.com/Pages/Traditional_Institutions_and_Land.htm, 12):

The structure of an African state implies that kings and chiefs rule by consent. A ruler's subjects are as fully aware of the duties he owes to them as they are of the duties they owe to him, and are able to exert pressure to make him discharge his duties.

While noting the unfortunate use of the colonial and apartheid concept of 'chief' by the author(s) it suffices to say that African traditional systems of administration were by nature dependent on the delegation of responsibilities from the highest authority down to the lowest individual; until the dawn of colonialism. Most of the data on traditional authority shows that the *khosi* delegated his responsibilities to the lower levels who in turn passed them on to those below them. The duties of the council-of-advisors who assisted the 'chiefs', in turn trickled down to the lowest level in the community regarding governance: the judiciary, legislative and executive. In most cases, as with Vhavenda, representatives were members of the royal family unit but also included ordinary members of the community who were bestowed with such responsibilities as well (Myburgh, 1981; Brookes, 1968; Aithey, 1990; Mönning, 1967; Mahosi, 2000; Mashele, 2003; Mair, 1977; Anene and Brown, 1966; Boonzaaier and Sharp, 1988). Thus this left room for the ruler and the council to reach consensus on matters of a sensitive nature that could compromise his/ her position if he/ she relied on coercion to have his/ her way on important matters (Boonzaaier and Sharp, 1988: 49).

Wamala (1997: 7) as well as Pillay and Prinsloo (1995: 7-14), write on the evolution of traditional leadership and authority, during colonialism and immediately after independence, that traditional leadership and authority administered justice because they tried lawsuits and mediated between conflicting parties. In line with the African cultural value systems that guide the Afrocentric paradigm, it is not far-fetched to posit that while conflict is fundamental to any human relations, its mediation by traditional leaders was geared at promoting the envisaged cooperation among Africans, particularly those who reside in the rural communities (Shai, 2018: 267). In essence this was the blueprint for those residing within the rural communities where traditional leadership and authority was ascribed by *vhuthu/ ubuntu/ botho* and communalism. One may deduce from this that although traditional systems of authority are said to

have revolved around the individual or his/ her ruling family they were to a certain degree administered openly. Ironically, this was echoed by M.C. De Wet Nel, then Minister of Native Affairs in South Africa during 1959, later 'Bantu Commissioner' of Vhavenda, who in the same year reportedly said of South Africa's traditional systems that "the traditional Bantu legal system ensured a high standard of justice" (Scheepers-Strydom, 1967, 81).

This is not to disregard De Wet Nel's objective as a government official. He represented the apartheid administration which was looking at the political benefits to be accrued by exploiting the African value system that was associated with *vuhosi* and therefore he was clouded in hypocrisy. Thus, regardless of their being viewed as undemocratic, backward and uncivilised, the South African government looked at how African value systems could be used for the promotion of colonial and apartheid administration policies. It is on this basis that even in the new democratic dispensation, traditional leadership is still treated with suspicion by pro-democracy advocates from the liberation movement; regardless of this African traditional political institution's utility value in organizing the rural communities (Shai, 2018: 269, 272, 273 and 278).

Myburgh (1981: 80), Cameron and Spies (1991: 46-47), Shorter (1977: 14), Beattie (1989: 139-140 and 167-169), Fortes and Evans-Pritchard (1946: 33, 38 and 39), Boonzaaier and Sharp (1988: 49), Ajayi (1992: 125-126) and Mair (1977: 139-142) further assert that the ruling family headed by a 'chief' or king was central to the government of the indigenous peoples of South Africa as he, the king, was responsible for making laws. This indicates the various responsibilities and roles that were associated with traditional authority, which were economic, political, legal and social. The statements, by Wamala, De Wet Nel, Mashele, Daphne and Myburgh lend credence to the crucial and central responsibility of traditional authority, indicating the magnitude of the authority and responsibility regardless of being deliberately interpreted as undemocratic. Of significance is that some authors concentrate on the character, nature and significance of these administrative responsibilities instead of focusing on the fact that they were centralised although they were not necessarily undemocratic and backward: a contradiction for different objectives (Myburgh, 1981:

80-82; Beattie, 1989: 167-169; Shai, 2018: 272-3; Lebitse, in *Sowetan*, July 10 2018: 7).

It would be logical to understand the nature of the administration of *vhuhosi* which from the sources appear centred on the *khosi* as the symbol of authority, in line with the nature of the authority vested in the leader: an authority which was, ironically, regarded as legitimate and generally accepted by the subjects and the council-of-elders. It is therefore important to note that regardless of being the symbol of highest authority as an individual among his people the *khosi* could not unilaterally make laws, execute judicial matters or call an assembly without consultation and enlisting cooperation of council-of elders (Anene and Brown, 1966: 343; Mashele, 2003: 4; Daphne, 1982: 1; Senyonjo (at http://www.feredo.com/Pages/Traditional_Institutions_and_Land.htm, 12); Fortes Evans-Pritchard, 1946: 12; Ajayi, 1992: 125-126; Mair, 1977: 128; Beattie, 1989: 172). This is evidence enough that regardless of not following the Western style of political administration African traditional authority was value-laden and was based on consultation, consensus and was democratic to a certain degree.

As if to support this notion Kotzé (1974: 67) hastens to say that “leadership in the African clan or tribe implies contact and being in touch with the people, being one with them and accommodating their will in his/ her decisions and pursuing their welfare”, to which this author is supported by Myburgh (1981: 72) and Anene and Brown (1966: 23). Thus, one is inclined to say that as the symbol of and the bearer of traditional authority, the African ruler administered on behalf of the people, through contact and in consultation with the council-of-elders who acted as advisers. This statement further expresses an element of legitimacy within the status of traditional authorities: a very important aspect that resided in the traditional ruler which can further be supported by the maxims contained in the quotation below by Donnelly (1984: 413-414) in Senyonjo, at http://www.feredo.com/Pages/Traditional_Institutions_and_Land.htm, 12:

To the Basotho in Lesotho ‘A chief is a chief by the people’; to the Lobedu of Transvaal, South Africa, ‘Chieftainship is people’ and the

Ndebele of Zimbabwe say: 'The king is the people. To respect the King is to respect oneself. He who despises the king despises us. He who praises our king praises us. The king is us'.

Loosely explained, this means that kingship and the African value system thereof that define it as the symbol of traditional authority, depended on the support, respect and loyalty of subjects. Thus, without the support of the people the traditional leader lacked the legitimacy to execute his responsibilities effectively. This again underlines the link that exists (ed) between traditional authority and the people and needs to be regarded as crucial and important in the socio-political context. This further supports the notion that traditional authority could only administer through the support of the council-of-elders: the voice of the subjects. In addition, the element of delegating roles is crucial because traditional authority "entailed different structures and levels of responsibility" (Tötemeyer, 1988: 9-12; Mair, 1977: 127; Mönnig, 1967: 249-250; Ayittey, 1991: 43-46; Fortes and Evans-Pritchard, 1946: 33-36; Anene and Brown, 1966: 344-345). Therefore, this further shows that regardless of being considered primitive traditional authority was truly democratic in nature. The preceding argument is again given credence by Stuchlick (1968: 18) whose conviction is that:

The chief is the wife of the tribe, according to the Tswana of Southern Africa. The chief is the breast of the nation, the mother of the people and the mother of orphans.

The above sentiment is echoed by Chief Phathekile Holomisa, then President of CONTRALESA, who describes traditional leadership and authority as the bedrock of democracy (*Mail and Guardian*, February 18 to 24, 2000: 33). The assertion by Holomisa spells out traditional leadership and authority as an all-encompassing aspect that describes the system. To support the assertion by Holomisa above, Mashele (2003: 5), Wamala (1997) and Mair (1977: 125) are in unison regarding the fact that traditional authority was based on the advice of the council-of-elders, especially in the process of executing the judicial and administrative functions of the tribe. What can be deduced from the statements from these various authors is the important place of

traditional authorities in the administrative and centralised system of government before being corrupted by the dawn of colonialism and apartheid (Lekgoathi, 2013: 14; Shai, 2018: 269).

Traditional leaders and authority further had an economic responsibility: the allocation of land to the subjects for the purpose of cultivation, control of village production, and a means of survival (Ayittey, 1991: 43-47; Mahosi, 2000: 1-2; Töttemeyer, 1988: 9-12; Fortes and Evans-Pritchard, 1946; Bekker in Church: 33, 36, 38; Anene and Brown, 1966: 344-345; Skweyiya, 1993: 7; Khapoya, 1994: 136; *Mail and Guardian*, February 18 to 24, 2000: 33; Ndou, 2000: 103; Nemudzivhaḡi, 1977: 103; Kirkaldy⁷, 2002: 329). Traditional leaders were therefore equally responsible for overseeing the land through their overall administration thereof on behalf of the community; hence tribal land was communally owned by the community. Holomisa (2009: 5) further supports this by saying that “the authority of traditional ruler means that they are historically leaders and overseers of their communities”. In essence the responsibilities included maintaining an interdependent as well as intra-dependent existence among the subjects for their socio-economic welfare (Booth, 1984: 737).

This further underlines how diverse the responsibilities or duties of traditional leaders were before colonialism. To corroborate the previous statements some sources point out that in the rural areas, tribal or communal land was owned by the tribe as a collective (Skweyiya, 1993: 3; Beattie, 1989: 172 and 252; Balandier, 1972: 96; Stuchlik, 1968:19-22; Mair, 1977: 125; Holomisa, February 18 to 24, 2000: 33; Anene and Brown, 1966: 345). It flows from what has already been indicated that the responsibilities of traditional leaders were wide-ranging. When describing the nature of traditional authority, Mashele (2003: 1) is of the view that “the nexus between traditional leaders and society is that they were the fathers of their respective polities and principal sources of communal unity.” Oomen (2005: 4) agrees with Mashele thus: “...chiefs could be central constituents.” In other words by virtue of the multiplicity of

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the responsibilities vested in them traditional leaders and their authority symbolised, and had the duty to symbolise unity amongst all and sundry.

This situation was greatly disrupted and eroded in many ways with the dawn of colonialism, missionary work, and later segregation under apartheid, which greatly disregarded the essence of the existence of traditionalism (*Sechaba*, August and October 1980: 14-17; Maloka, 1995 (a): 36-38; Mahosi, 2000: 1-2; Beinart and Dubow 1995: 1; Skweyiya, 1993: 3-7; Teffo: 140-147; Nethengwe, 2005: 30-35). As succinctly put by Beinart and Dubow (1995: 2) when African “chiefdoms were finally conquered and boundaries of the South African state consolidated”, after the defeat of Mphephu during the ‘Mphephu-Boer War, 1898-1899’ and the final subjugation of Vhavenda, and especially after the 1899-1902 South African War (Anglo-Boer War) in the twentieth century segregation was modified (Khangala, 1999; Nemudzivhadi, 1977 and 2017). These changes thus disrupted the political and socio-economic life of black South Africans, and Vhavenda traditional authority in particular. The thrust of this disruption was felt in political control and socio-economic independence which translated into control of the land and access to cheap black labour. Disregarding similarities that could be established between European and African political, social and legal systems, white administrators set about inventing modified African traditions and modified customary law for their politico-administrative benefit (Beinart and Dubow, 1995: 1; Mbeki, 3 August 2001: 4; Myburgh, 1985: 63, 81; Fortes and Evans-Pritchard, 1946). The basis for this administrative injustice was the desperate desire on the part of the white establishment to project European-centred political and economic systems as superior to their indigenous African counterparts; an observation which should be understood within the pseudo-narrative of white supremacy in all aspects of life (Shai, 2018: 268).

The colonisers’ ‘own respect’ for tradition disposed them to look with favour upon what they took to be traditional in Africa which could be adopted and adapted into their own system of administration and thus make it easier to control and manipulate Africans, and *vuhosi* in particular. Note that own respect is put in inverted commas to show that the current researcher does not necessarily buy this claim that they indeed respected tradition. However, the researcher avers that they realised the central place that traditional authority occupied among traditional communities and saw a window

of opportunity to adopt and adapt it for imperial/ colonial gains. It is for this reason that they codified and promulgated these traditions and in the process transformed value laden-flexible customs into hard prescriptions (Department of Education, "Venda Terminology and Orthography, no. 3, 1980: 40; Benso, 1979: 41; Benyon in Hammond-Tooke, 1974: 393-4; Daphne, 1982: 2; Beinart and Dubow, 1995: 16).

Hobsbawm and Ranger (1983: 213) consolidate this assertion by contending that "imported from Europe these traditions not only provided whites with models of command but also offered many Africans models of 'modern' behaviour". These authors further point out that the invented traditions of African societies- whether invented by the Europeans and adopted by Africans themselves in response- "distorted the past but became in themselves realities through which a good deal of colonial encounter was expressed" (Hobsbawm and Ranger, 1983: 213). Nothing could have emphasized the socio-economic and political damage that African rulers and their subjects experienced better because the presence of Europeans in the continent affected them and their tradition in so many ways. These authors (1983: 213) further put it explicitly when they expressly state that:

Africans became peasants, their agricultural surplus expropriated through unequal terms of trade, tax or rent and their subordinate role in a shared cultural system defined by mission Christianity.

In the main the essence of colonial inventions was to use, misuse or abuse and manipulate traditional authority by transforming it into agents of negative change that suited the objective of colonial oppression and discrimination as well as apartheid segregation that gave birth to the homeland system. In addition Hobsbawm and Ranger (1983: 220) assert that colonial governments in Africa, and by implication South Africa included, did not wish to rule by a constant exercise of military force because they needed a wide range of collaborators than those Africans who were brought into the neo-traditions of subordination: hence they co-opted traditional leadership and authority. It is worth noting that while most traditional leaders had collaborated with white minority rule during the heydays of apartheid and for their

selfish reasons, some of them have sympathised and/ or supported the liberation cause as led by the ANC and like-minded forces (Shai, 2018: 269).

Ironically, in all practical terms colonial governments did use military force to rule and quell resistance, just like they did against Makhado and Mphephu, as will be seen later in the study. This allowed them to conquer and subjugate Africans, albeit with the help of missionaries, to a certain extent, who acted as go-betweens in many stances (Bavenda⁸: Makhado [Magato] or Ramapulana Tribes, Native Affairs Department, 13 September 1926; Welcome to Venda, Bureau for Information and Broadcasting, 1979: 3). Van Rensburg (2013: 27) maintains that missionaries supported colonialism because they believed that European control would provide a political environment conducive to missionary activity. From this statement it suffices to adduce that the relationship of the missionaries with the colonial government was to the benefit of their project of 'civilising and converting', *alas* to conquer, colonise and control. Therefore, the role of missionaries as go-betweens benefitted them in many ways and thus did not benefit traditional leaders and their communities.

Be that as it may Europeans particularly needed the 'friendship' of pliable traditional leaders and elders in the rural areas because "the collaboration was in essence a very practical affair of exchanged benefits" (Hobsbawm and Ranger, 1983: 213, 229; Bekker, 1975: 200; Beinart and Dubow, 1975: 6). The study would argue that the situation of exchanged benefits is hard to comprehend especially because in the ultimate the coloniser's objective was to subjugate and control the same traditional leaders and reduce their status and authority. Ironically the colonial rulers claim that they felt the urgent need for a shared ideology of Empire which could embrace whites and blacks alike, while dignifying the practicalities of collaboration and justifying the

⁸ Throughout the study the current researcher prefers to use the name Vhavenda as it is the correct Tshivenda lexicon. However, it is worth noting that elsewhere, like in the recent source above, the colonial powers, missionaries, government ethnologists, Eurocentric/ Western historians and anthropologists interchangeably write it as Bavenda or Bawenda as it suited them. Therefore, where it reads otherwise in a title of a source, the researcher writes it as it appears for reference convenience.

imposition of white rule. Therefore, the claim of 'friendship' is neither here nor there since collaboration benefitted colonisers and missionaries alike, with the result that traditional leaders and their communities lost economic and political independence.

Therefore it is ironic for authors to talk about benefits accrued by *mahosi* and their communities because overall they were both, either willingly or unwillingly, existing at the whim of the powers that be. Although collaborators might have benefitted for their part, acquiring some of the trappings of "neo-traditional monarchy, they lost credibility while their subjects lost socio-economic livelihoods" (Mbeki, 3 August 2001: 1). Be that as it may the colonial and apartheid governments recognized the institution of *vuhosi* because they saw in it an important political instrument to implement their horrendous policies. Therefore, when the die was cast and in the absence of support from certain *mahosi*, they withheld recognition of dissenting and recalcitrant individuals by recognising and/ or appointing collaborators in their place (Union of South Africa 13/10/1, 3rd November 1949, Louis Trichardt District; TA GOV 1152, PS 50/37/08. Telegram to Governor of Transvaal to Secretary of State, 1908.09.19; Powers of paramount chiefs; VG, Commission of inquiry into Venda Vuhosi Affairs, 2 (2), 1990: 728-738; Statutes of the Republic of South Africa- Blacks, "Black Administration Act, no. 38 of 1927: 3; Boonzaaier and Sharp, 1988: 49; Daphne, 1982: 2-3; Venter, 1989: 113; "Access to justice for all: Embracing tradition", Issued by the Department of Justice and Constitutional Development (DJCD), Republic of South Africa, 16; Rutsch, 1995: 36).

The dissenting voices suffered loss of certain rights, such as "control over the distribution of land or the right to impose fines, by transferring these to centrally controlled bureaucracies of white magistrates. These changes were made possible through the enactment of the Natives Administration Act (Act no. 38) of 1927. The legislation enabled the white authorities to locate and identify potential collaborators to the system who could either be *mahosi* or *magota*, for appointment or promotion, respectively (Black Administration Act No. 38 of 1927: 145; Republic of Venda, National Assembly Standing Rules of Procedure 1984: 16; SA GG 1191 50/1693. Minute 50/1693, 1942.10.13, An investigation into the circumstances of the deposition

of Peter Sinthumule from chieftainship of the Bavenda tribe and the appointment of George Sinthumule in his place: 1942: 3; SA URU 2353 1921 Acts of Misconduct, Folio 432; Afdanking van Rasimphi Sibasa⁹ (a corrupted version of Tshivhase) as hoof van die Vhavenda stam te Sibasa en aanstelling van Ratshialingwa Tshivhase in sy plek; TA GOV 1152, PS 50/37/08. Telegram to Governor of Transvaal to Secretary of State, 1908.09.19. Powers of paramount chiefs; Venter, 1989: 113; Maylam, 1986: 163-164; Nethengwe, 2005: 55-56; Jeannerat, 1997: 221, 222, 235; Bekker, 1993: 200; Institute for a Democratic Alternative in South Africa (IDASA), 2003: 4; Breytenbach, 1975: 4, 5). The deposition of Peter Sinthumule from chieftainship of the Vhavenda 'tribe' and the appointment of George Sinthumule in his place in the Sinthumule area on the one hand and the "afdanking van Rasimphi Sibasa as hoof van die Vhavenda stam te Sibasa en aanstelling van Ratshialingwa Tshivhase in sy plek", were actually a mirror of events. The two *mahosi* were not swayed and therefore paid the price of deposition. Similarly, in truth both Piet and Ratshimpi did not 'afdank' but were summarily deposed for being non-collaborative.

The Native Administration Act of 1927 (Act no. 38) would later be amended as the 'Administration Amendment Act (Black Administration 1927, Amendment) Act, No. 9 of 1929 a few years later. The end product was the supplanting of the African value systems of administration of *vhuhosi*, leading to radical change to its original role, functions and authority. In the event, the Governor-General was made the Supreme Chief of black South Africans and thus could appoint, demote and/ or depose recalcitrant *mahosi* willy-nilly (Statutes of the Republic of South Africa- Blacks: Black Administration Act No. 38 of 1927: 145; Republic of Venda, National Assembly Standing Rules of Procedure 1984: 16; TA GOV 1152, PS 50/37/08. Telegram to Governor of Transvaal to Secretary of State, 1908.09.19. Powers of paramount chiefs; VG, Commission of inquiry into Venda Vhuhosi Affairs, 2(2), 1908: 728-738; Mahosi, 2000: 2; Skweyiya, 1993: 5). At all local levels of administration the powers and authority of *mahosi* were reduced or diluted and taken over by the administration of

⁹ Like many Tshivenda names mentioned earlier, Sibasa is the corrupted version of Tshivhase. Therefore Rasimphi Sibasa should actually read Ratshimpi Tshivhase, former *khosi* of the Tshivhase dynasty, family or clan and a descendent of Ṭhohoyandou.

the magistrates. Regardless of resistance, protestations and complaints their problems went unentertained (“Black Administration Act”, no. 38 of 1927: 145; Republic of Venda, National Assembly Standing Rules of Procedure 1984: 16; Burman, 1979: 1; Mudzanani, 2000: 23).

The changes in the role, functions and authority of *mahosi*, such as administration, control and distribution of land, had been made possible and effective through the delimitation of what came to be known as the ‘native reserves’, resulting in hardships accompanied by shortage of land, water and resultant poverty (TA GOV 1152, PS 50/37/08. Telegram to Governor of Transvaal to Secretary of State, 1908.09.19. Powers of paramount chiefs; VG, Venda Vhuhosi Affairs, 2(2), 1990: 728-738; Statutes of the Republic of South Africa- Blacks: “Black Administration Act, no. 38 of 1927: 39; Jones, 1940: 175; Bekker, 1993: 201). The outcome thereof was that the boundaries of respective polities, referred to as ‘natural boundaries’ prior to the dawn of colonialism, were disregarded and whole areas divided into colonial districts and locations. With changes communities were forcibly removed, relocated and administered as cheap black labour for white farms (Department of Education and Training, “Venda Terminology and Orthography”, no. 3, 1980: 142) (TAB, KLT, volume 2/1/6. Native locations, Mphephu’s location. Report from the Native Affairs Commissioner, Soutpansberg District, 12 September 1904, 23 September 1904, 30 September 1904: 15; TAB, KLT, volume 2/1/6. Native locations, Mphephu’s location. Report from the Native Affairs Commissioner, Soutpansberg District, 12th September 1904: 9; LDE, Archives of the Department of Land Affairs, vol. 202, Makhado location 1906. Report from Commandant General P.J. Joubert, 17 October 1898; Boonzaaier and Sharp, 1988: 49).

The forced removal, relocation and administration of black South Africans was enacted by the Natives Land Act of 1913 (Act 27 of 1913) a precursor of the Natives Administration Act of 1927. This Act, like many efforts and proclamations before it, set the white authorities on a collision course with black South Africans as it enforced their forced removal and as such interfered with their autonomy and the socio-political administration of *vhuhosi* with the demarcation of land into white commercial farms. This reduced the size of the historical land thereby affecting the size of the respective

the communities, the number of *magota* and the productive cultivation thereof: the basis of the authority of *vuhosi* and its institutions (GG, 1542, 50/406, 1164, Natives Land Act of 1913 (Act 27 of 1913); GG, 1542, 50/398, 1164, Telegram from Secretary of State, London to High Commissioner, Cape Town; GG 1542, 50/381, 1164, “Natives and the Land Act, “The Cape Argus, Saturday, February 14, 1914; GG 1542, 50/403, Natives Land Act of 1913-1914 U.G. 7, 1919: 197; Jones, 1940: 176, 193; Venter, 1989: 193; Conerly, 1990: 63-64; Nefale, 1998: 10-21; Nemapate, 1998: 22-24). For example originally the Manenzhe polity had 22 (twenty) of *magota* who by 1935 had dwindled to 15 (fifteen) and subsequently reduced to 6 (six) headmen by 1948 (Interview with ‘*Thovhele*’ T.A. Manenzhe, 10 July 2018; Interview with V.C. Maluta, 03 July 2018 and 10 July 2018)¹⁰. In the same vein a similar experience affected the Ravele people when they were forcibly removed from the area around Tshakhuma between 1903 and 1926 and were resettled at Beaconsfield, presently called Mauluma, under Mphephu Traditional Authority (Nemudzivhaḁi, 1985: 26). It is a historical fact that the main aim of these sister legislation was to destroy the autonomy of traditional authorities by taking away control of the land, break the power and authority of certain *mahosi* and their subordinates because they were perceived as dangerous foci of resistance to colonial rule.

Resultantly *mahosi* were commonly regarded as instruments of alien control as they were made subordinates of the colonial status quo, something which was foreign to African cultural value systems. They were even made to pay tribute to colonial powers, something that was unheard of as this was supposed to be the other way round considering the fact that the colonial powers or officials were in all practical terms and earnest subjects of *mahosi* had it not been for the Eurocentrically driven colonial policy (Government Archives, Sibasa, Box no. 148, File no. N2/2/2/2, 1958, Control of people no more lay under the jurisdiction of headmen and chiefs, SRP 6/92, Report of the Department of Native Affairs (NAD/ DNA) for the years 1913-1918. Presented to both

¹⁰ ‘*Thovhele*’ T.A. Manenzhe is the *Khosi* of Manenzhe Traditional Authority at Ha-Manenzhe, in the Vhembe District Municipality (VDM); V.C. Maluta is a senior History teacher at Waterval Secondary School near Elim, in the Makhado Local Municipality of the Vhembe District Municipality. He holds a BA.Ed. (Univen), B.Ed. (Unisa), BA Hons. (History, Univen) and MA (Ancient History, Stellenbosch).

Houses of Parliament by the command of his Excellency the Governor General; Union Government (U.G.) 7-9, Land Act of 1913; Mudzanani, 2000: 21; Bekker, 1993: 26). In the event the white authorities were able to rapaciously carve out the land for their economic use, segregate black South Africans and whites territorially, indiscriminately reduce the size of 'reserves' while increasing their numbers, create pools for cheap black labour, thereby laying the basis for the homeland policy of white South Africa (U.G. 22, 1914: 377, 378, 379, 385; Jones, 1940: 175-179, 193; Ramabulana, 1990: 10-11; Munyai, 1989: 12; Mudzanani, 2000: 21; Ramudzuli, 1998: 5, 6, 9; Nefale, 1998: 9).

Predictably, the South African government later enacted new legislation called the Bantu Administration Act of 1951 (an extension of the Native Administration Act of 1927) with the aim of 'restoring' the powers of *mahosi*, to be used and abused as instruments of colonialism. From the naked eye it appeared as if they were restoring the integrity and authority of the now 'faceless' *vhuhosi*. However, in the ultimate was to establish ethnic 'bantus' homelands or Bantustans (a successor name to the reserves) while dividing or segregating Africans for more effective political control (U.G. 61, 1955; Mönning, 1967: 36; Venter, 1989: 114; Nefale, 1999: 1, 3; Bekker, 1993: 11; Breytenbach, 1975: 4, 5).

Ironically individuals who could demonstrate genealogical links to royal families were drawn into the existing administrative systems with the assistance of government appointed ethnologist, and assumed their presence in the administrative hierarchy between location headman and district magistrates (CAD, NTS, 264, c21/51, Report on the soil Survey of Beaufort No. 75, Levubu River, District Zoutpansberg, Transvaal, by M.V.Z. Pellissier, March 1948: 7; Appropriation Bill (C) Verbatim Report (Hansard) of the Fourth Session of the Second Venda Assembly, Thohoyandou, vol. 29, no. 1, 20 March-17 September 1987: 237-238; VG, Venda Vhuhosi Affairs, 1989/90: 10; Nefale, 1999, 3). This made it possible for legitimate and potential heirs to be demoted to lower status or removed from *vhuhosi* while nonentities secured positions of influence as *mahosi*. It is clear from this onset that the practice was intentionally flawed to manipulate the process to benefit collaborative individuals at the expense of those individuals who were regarded as dissenters.

Predictably, this caused a scramble for *vhuhosi* status by people with questionable genealogical claims. Although the government appointed ethnologists to ‘arbitrate’ in such circumstances the process was a mere formality. A stark example is that of Ratshimphi Tshivhase (a legitimate heir to the throne) who was said to have relinquished (afdank) the throne for Ratshialingwa (his half-brother) who was favourable to white authorities (Van Warmelo 1975: 11; SA URU 2353 1921 Acts of Misconduct, Folio 432. *Afdanking* van Rasimphi Sibasa (Tshivhase) en aanstelling van Ratshialingwa Tshivhase in sy plek; SA GG 1191 50/1693. Minute 50/1693, 1942.10.13 from Governor-General to lawyers Hellman and Baker in Johannesburg, Native, Miscellaneous; Dangale, 1993). The second incident is that of the Sinthumule case where a successor George Mukhudwana, was appointed based on the contents of a controversial ‘will’ allegedly drafted in his favour by their father (Chief Sinthumule) in 1923, instead of Piet Dzhombere (Petition praying for an investigation into the circumstances of the deposition of Peter Sinthumule and the appointment of George Sinthumule; SA URU 2353 1921 Acts of Misconduct, Folio 432; Van Warmelo, 1975: 17; Bekker, 1993: 200). This created tension among members of these entire royal families and caused internal strife and division. These practices were highly flawed because Vhavanḁa rely on the customary law of succession to identify an heir apparent as well as potential and legitimate successor.

Among Vhavanḁa a famous maxim holds that “*vhuhosi vhu tou bebelwa*”, literally meaning that “*vhuhosi is ascribed by birth*” such that the status of *vhuhosi* should not be an imposition. Ntsebenza (1999: 83) sums this by saying that “chiefly authority is ascribed by lineage and patriarchal principles rather than achieved through elections.” In all practical term, elections are rooted in a competitive setup, an alien context which does not find a true and honest expression within the African value system, let alone Vhavanḁa value system. It is from this premise that the white minority government abused Vhavanḁa values of *vhuhosi* by using the institution to legitimise its wrong practices and impose politically cosmetised structures in the homelands. The government used the past to actually appeal to traditional leaders by invoking symbols of *vhuhosi* in order to ‘sanitise’ resistance to and foster feelings of *group/ethnic identity* (VG, Venda Vhuhosi Affairs, 1989/90: 72-76; Interview with Prof. V.M.N. Ralushai, on Phaphala FM, “Nḁevhetsini Actuality Programme”, 14 June 2005; Mathivha, 1985: 8-10; Bekker, 1993: 126). Kgatla (2016: n.p) argues that the government in Pretoria

imposed tribal divisions and sowed seeds of hatred, hostility, violence and stout resistance to African values and bribed 'chiefs' to be part of the system. This does not come as a surprise because then the Pretoria government was based on the European value system which manifested itself through racial discrimination, hatred, violent conflicts and competition (Dalglish, Du Plessis, Lules and Pietersen, 2009: 45).

This clearly shows that before this the relationship between *mahosi* and subjects is/ was very crucial and is/ was subscribed by African values, which does determine socio-political welfare from generation to generation. Therefore such a relationship was in tandem with all responsibilities of *vuhosi* such that regardless of the new position(s) *mahosi* did not own the land. Pheko (1986: 37) argues that traditional leaders had no mandate to sell or give land to any person because according to African custom, the ruler did not own the land but the whole community. To cement this Delius (*City Press Voices*, 24 July 2018: 1) advances that the idea that *mahosi* own the land came with colonialism. Therefore, in contrast these colonial inventions expanded their power over communities by bringing into the picture the notion of land ownership by *mahosi*: a product of colonial and apartheid intervention, whereas in the pre-colonial past they held the land on behalf of their subjects (Delius, 24 June 2018: 1). These changes flouted the very tenets of African/ Vhavenda value systems.

2.1.2 Clarification of concepts: Vhavenda, Venda and kingship

The name Vhavenda originally referred to Vhangoṅa aboriginal group who are historically believed to have crossed the Vhembe/ Limpopo River and settled in the area called Venda, from time immemorial, regarded to be towards the end of the 13th century (1200s) (Welcome to Venda, Bureau of Information and Broadcasting, Venda Government, 1979: 3; Venda: A land of independence, a land of culture, n.d.; Nemudzivhaḍi, 1985: 19). However, the origin of Vhangoṅa is not explicitly spelt out in the sources consulted safe to say that they arrived in the present day Venda from the northern direction of central Africa (Lestrade in Van Warmelo, 1932: xxiv; Nemudzivhaḍi, 1977: iii). Needless to say, Venda is a geographic location wherein Vhavenda have settled therein for many centuries. The area is situated in the north-eastern corner of South Africa which borders Zimbabwe and Mozambique but straddles the entire northern area. In the pre-colonial past the area used to be far larger in size than the present day and straddled from the east to the west along the

Soutpansberg Mountain Range (“Venda Travelogue, Republic of Venda, 1989/90: n.p.; Benso, 1979: 17). Khangala (1999: 1) asserts that the prefix ‘Vha-’ is used to refer to Venda people and other groups in the ‘ethnic’ context and that its derivatives are generally used because of the fact that his study was written in the English language. Although marvelling at the honesty displayed by this author, the current researcher would argue that this is tacit evidence of Eurocentric influence on the same author’s style of writing. Suffice to say, in Benso (1979: 17) Vhavenda are an ethnic group identifiable by their own traditional clothing, common cultural practices, common language and history.

More sources written earlier have displayed this general Eurocentric lexical influence when referring to black South African groups: the Batsonga/ Bathonga, the Bapedi, the Basotho, to mention a few (Wessmann, 1900; Van Warmelo, 1935; Stayt, 1968; Nemudzivhadi, 1977 and 2017; Mabogo, 1990; Khangala, 1999; it is worth noting the presence of Vhavenda authors cited in this instance). In the same fashion as above, Vhavenda sub-groups are referred to as the Vhalemba, the Vhatavhatsindi, the Vhambedzi, the Vhasenzi/ Vhasenzi, again to mention a few. In the same vein Vhavenda are referred to as the Vhavenda or the Venda. According to Khangala (1999) the use of ‘the’ before the prefix ‘Vha-’ is because history is written in the English language, further proof of Eurocentric influence in the use of the lexicon. Equally important is that the area is called Vendaland (Stayt, 1968; Wessman, 1900; Kirkaldy, 2004; Nemudzivhadi, 2017). Therefore, to desist from this Eurocentric linguistic influence, in this study the people are referred to as Vhavenda instead of ‘the Vhavenda’ or ‘the Venda’, as this is firstly a lexical corruption and secondly it sounds tautological because the prefix ‘Vha-’ is as much a plural form of ‘Mu-’ (Muvenda), and an equivalent form of ‘the’, as ‘the’ is a plural form of ‘a’. According to Obenga (1997: 36-37, in Maruma and Dhliwayo, n.d: 4) language is inextricably linked to thought as it expresses people’s philosophy and identity. Obenga (1997: 36-37) further notes that a “people’s first explanation of themselves/ their identity proceeds from how they name and conceptualise their language. In this regard Maruma and Dhliwayo (n.d: 5) posit that at the core of the crisis faced by Africans is the colonial conquest and the hegemonic imposition of European languages and culture. To concretise this Fick (July 13 to 19 2018: 34) avers that “... the development of dictionaries of indigenous

languages in the colonial period and the translation of European texts such as the bible were central to the Christian components of colonialism.”

It is in this context that this study argues that this was the reason that foreigners could not understand Vhavenda language and how it named geographic features. To support this Fick (July 13 to 19 2018: 34) avers that it was the differences noted by the settlers that mattered and held sway. To avoid this linguistic contamination, in this study the area is called Venda (and not Vendaland as the settlers would have wanted it to be called); or Vhavenda homeland when deemed appropriate; or the Venda homeland and not **the** Vhavenda homeland. This is meant to avoid European hegemonic influence on language as much as possible. As it will emerge later in the study Masingo/ Vhasenzi conquered Vhangona and other earlier inhabitants and later assimilated all and sundry into and a multi-cultural people, Vhavenda (Nemudzivhadi, 1977 and 2017; Mabogo, 1990; Khangala, 1999). It is also essential to follow up with the discussion below on hierarchical concepts along the lines of the African perspective which is centred on customary-cultural creations passed on down generations.

In line with the discussion above, throughout the reading process the current researcher noted more of Eurocentric influence regarding the misuse of concepts on hierarchical positions of *vuhosi* of Vhavenda. This has resulted in gross misconception, misinterpretation, mistranslation as well as misrepresentation of these concepts. Regrettably this misconception, misinformation, misinterpretation, mistranslation and misrepresentation of these fundamental hierarchical concepts was a result of the objectives of colonial masters, missionaries and the European power-houses to deliberately denigrate black South Africans in general, as alluded to by Fick above, and the ‘historical-traditional-cultural’ position of *mahosi* in particular. In the same vein Ajayi (1992: 125) further describes traditional authority as deriving from an established belief by society in the sanctity of immemorial traditions and the legitimacy of the status of those exercising authority over them. It is against this gross misconception, misinterpretation, mistranslation as well as misrepresentation of these

concepts that the study begs a different discussion on these hierarchical concepts of *vuhosi* of Vhavenda.

In this regard Maruma and Dhliwayo (n.d.: 1) raise the danger of the hegemony of European languages which contributes to the spiritual assault as well as the cultural and psychological 'misorientation' of Africans. In the same context, in his writing on 'Vendaland' during the late nineteenth century, while referring to Berlin missionaries, Kirkaldy (2004: 12) points to the tendencies of the extreme form of "*othering*" that were generally perpetuated by Europeans against Africans, and Vhavenda traditional leaders, specifically Ramabulana, Tshivhase and Mphaphuli. In support of this, Halala (2011: 18) refers to Cuendet (1950) who views African traditional leadership as an entity that was supposed to play a secondary role to European administration, which he (Cuendet) associated with civilisation as opposed to the 'barbaric, cannibalistic and heathen' Africans. Most notably Halala (2011: 18) further argues that "in their obsession with cultural evolutionism, they dichotomised what they saw as their own developed 'civilisations' and African 'savagery' or 'barbarism'; the 'light of civilisation' and the 'darkness of heathenism'". Kirkaldy's (2004: 12) contention clearly shows the general attitude of polarity displayed by the European hegemonic attitudes towards Africans, and Vhavenda in particular. In support of this, Halala (2011: 54) and Shai (2018: 270) succinctly contend that Western analyses of tradition consist of binary linguistic opposites: modern and traditional, white and black, good and bad, objective and subjective, among the few, which all have the hallmarks of "*othering*".

In further corroborating Kirkaldy's sentiments on European views in their "*othering*", Halala (2011: 34) mentions that in South Africa interaction between *mahosi* and authorities was influenced by Western European civilisation and liberal views. The result was that African culture was viewed as illiberal, backward and barbaric, such that it had to be destroyed or transformed along the lines of Western culture. In short the suggestion is that African culture and all its value systems could add no value to socio-political and economic development, unless if it was adopted and adapted to Eurocentric values. Therefore the misinterpretation, misconception, mistranslation and misrepresentation of concepts was part of a larger project to devalue the African value

system on which the 'historical-traditional-cultural' African/ Vhavenda hierarchical concepts that related to power, legitimacy and authority were founded. The following analysis should be understood within the context that *vuhosi* represents the custodianship of African culture and their political heritage (2018: 268-270).

It is worth noting that Kirkaldy (2004: 13) admits that attempting to translate or interpret administrative and hierarchical concepts of Vhavenda would ensue a debate on the nature of *vuhosi*, and cautions that the territory would rather be left unchartered. Thus Kirkaldy admits avoiding the use of colonial concepts like 'chiefs' or 'headmen', but nonetheless uses the concepts *khosi* (singular)/ *mahosi* (plural) or *gota* (singular)/ *magota* (plural), while referring to *Khosi* Ramabulana and/or Makhado, *Khosi* Tshivhase and *Khosi* Mphaphuli. This is against the backdrop that Ramabulana and his successor, Makhado, were historically/originally kings and in fact of a higher status than the other two *mahosi*: Tshivhase and Mphaphuli.

It is essential to acknowledge that by avoiding to seek a deeper understanding of these hierarchical concepts would mean that Kirkaldy was caught in the middle and chose a liberal stance rather than delve deeper into the discussion of their true representations, which is meant to explain the true nature of the levels of Vhavenda socio-political hierarchy. In corroborating Kirkaldy's stance, Jean-Marie Dederen¹¹ agrees that concepts such as 'chief/ chieftaincy/ chieftainship' have colonial connotations and that they should be avoided and rendered redundant. Dederen further asserts that *vuhosi* was problematic in that it does not have a specific meaning; a worrying exposition in this regard. Dederen then somersaults and admits that the concept *vuhosi* should enjoy resonance because it has weathered the storm. This is indicative of the fact that liberal Eurocentric approach lost the opportunity to understand and use the concepts as they were and/ or search for their true/ equivalent meanings because this suited the political administrative terminology; hence these concepts "weathered the storm".

¹¹ Dr. Jean-Marc Dederen is/ was a Senior Lecturer of Anthropology in the Department of Anthropology at the University of Venda. He was interviewed in 2006 at the University of Venda, Thohoyandou.

Importantly, engaging in fact-finding interviews, would have established that these concepts do have equivalents elsewhere, rather than avoid searching for their true and/ or equivalent meanings. Admittedly, Kirkaldy (2004: 13) asserts that the concepts 'chief/ chieftainship/ chieftaincy/ chiefship' were associated with oppression and were a violation of socio-political rights. The mere fact that the same author used *khosi/ mahosi* and/ or *gota/ magota* regardless, presented a golden opportunity to research further because during apartheid the concepts of *khosikhulu*, *khosi* or *gota*, were not applied in accordance with African/ Vhavenda value systems but were deliberately misconstrued and misapplied.

It is in this regard that Kirkaldy indicates that "attempting to translate the terms *khosi/ mahosi* and *gota/ magota* opens a debate on the nature of Vhavenda traditional leadership" (Kirkaldy, December 1999: 78; Kirkaldy, 2002: 55; Kirkaldy, May 2003: 175; Kirkaldy, May 2004: 13). However, the author further raises the concern that using colonial terms such as 'chiefs' and 'headmen' always creates a problem, because the colonial meanings were always attached to the question of achieving administrative objectives (as seen in Lestrade in Van Warmelo, 1905: XXVII). This leads one to understand that colonial concepts are/ were not equivalents of the real socio-cultural status of traditional leadership, and *vhuhosi* of Vhavenda in particular. It is against this backdrop that Makhado specifically refused to be referred to as a 'chief', but a king till the end (Baramapulana¹² or Bavenda Tribe under Magato, Location Commission 1906-7). From a number of sources, historically the Ramabulana dynasty was the most senior above Tshivhase and Mphaphuli and during his time Makhado continued to lay claim to his dominance over them (Van Warmelo, 1935 and 1940; Stayt, 1968; Dzivhani, 1940; Motenda, 1940; Mudau, 1940).

The absence of an understanding of the true nature of the levels of Vhavenda socio-political hierarchy within the Eurocentric circles is not surprising because by the time ethnologists, missionaries and/ or other government agents like Stayt (1968),

¹² As a result of the Eurocentric lexical influence that corrupted Tshivenda names and concepts, in some sources Ramabulana is written as Ramapulana; hence Baramapulana refers to the people of King Ramabulana. Similarly, Makhado is also referred to as Magato in some sources.

Schapera (1966), Wessmann (1900), Van Warmelo (1935), Gottschling (1905), Dzivhani (1940), Motenda (1940) and Mudau (1940), among others, who wrote about Vhavenda carried on with their work, these concepts had already been tempered with in the name of political expediency. Nemudzivhadi (2017: 69) is of the view that this project displayed all the ramifications of clashing with the political customs of Vhavenda kingdom. Nemudzivhadi (2017: 5) further contends that “it is interesting to note that officials and private individuals who were contemporaries of Makhado in the nineteenth century addressed him differently: ‘kapitein’, ‘hoofdkapitein’, ‘opperhoofd’ or ‘king’. This clearly shows that the powers that be and/ or their officials either did so deliberately or followed the masters’ voice, using whatever terminology to refer to Makhado, while knowing very well that he was above all the other *mahosi* in status. In the same vein and in all earnest Makhado was not an ordinary individual on the same level as colonial powers and their officials were. Nemudzivhadi (2017: 5) cites from Wessmann (1900: 117-118) and P.J. Joubert’s letter (15 December 1894, SS4485, R1190/95) that one Commandant-General Piet Joubert of the South African Republic on one occasion acknowledged that Makhado was ‘king’. Nemudzivhadi (2017: 5) further cites that Van Warmelo (1940: 168) “purposefully omitted to refer to Makhado’s successor, George Mmbulaheni Mphephu Ramabulana as “*Thovhele musanda wa Venda*” (literally translated to mean installed Supreme King of Venda). It is against this backdrop that the onus to give a brief explanation of these concepts lies with the current researcher if one were to understand the true nature of hierarchy levels of *vhuhosi* of Vhavenda as it is done below:

(f) *Thovhele/ Thovhela*

The concept refers to the king who sits at the apex of Vhavenda’s socio-political rung, the highest royal title of the institution of *vhuhosi*. This is an equivalent to a sovereign kingship or even ‘supreme ruler’ elsewhere (Nemudzivhadi, 2017: xix, 5). According to the African value system this is also regarded as a symbol of unity in a Vhavenda polity, *Thovhela* state, which existed until the early 1700s when Vhangoṅa were conquered by Ṭhohoyandou and Masingo who then adopted their hierarchical political system (Mabogo, 1990: 13). Apart from being a supreme head of his people *Thovhele* is/ was a foreseer of a large area on behalf of his community, which he administered through *mahosimahulu* (plural of *khosi-khulu*). *Thovhele* was also called *muzwale*,

meaning father and begetter of many (Nemudzivhaqi, 2017: xix; Netshisaulu¹³, interviewed on 03 July 2018, University of Venda); hence colonial powers could not contemplate that within the African value system existed a highest position equivalent to kingship elsewhere in Europe: hence the reference of *khosikhulu* as king, which king actually means *thovhele*. This should be understood within the context of the asymmetrical status in terms of international prestige between the metropolitan states and their colonised states.

According to Mabogo (1990: 13) today the concept *thovhele* is a general title for *mahosi*, which is the third rung in the Vhavenda hierarchy of *vhuhosi*, clearly proving that the title has lost its original meaning and significance. Tshithukhe¹⁴ (interviewed on 03 July 2018, University of Venda) admitted that within the Tshivhase Traditional Authority the title was adopted for Midiyavhathu Kennedy Prince¹⁵ Tshivhase during the contestation for Vhavenda kingship between the two houses of Ramabulana and Tshivhase in the early 2000s. As a result in this study wherever *thovhele* is used as a title of a *khosi* in the present context it appears in an apostrophized form: '*Thovhele*'. That the common ancestry between Ramabulana and Tshivhase houses has not served as a foundation to ameliorate their conflictual relations over *vhuhosi* status can partly be attributed to the general influence of materialism in human-political relations and Eurocentric influence. This influence has eroded the humanist essence of African value systems, of which the bedrock remains a family and *ubuntu/ botho* (Shai and Iroanya, 2014: 919), which in Tshivenda is called *vhuthu*.

¹³ Dr. Nthambeleni Cedric Netshisaulu is/ was a lecturer of Tshivenda language in the M.E.R. Centre for African Languages at the University of Venda, Tshohoyandou, Limpopo Province.

¹⁴ The late Seth Azwihangwisi Tshithukhe was a *gota* (headman) under Tshivhase Traditional Authority and a lecturer of Tshivenda language in the M.E.R. Centre for African Languages at the University of Venda, Tshohoyandou, Limpopo Province.

¹⁵ Prince is the name Midiyavhathu Kennedy inherited from his late father and predecessor, Thikhathali Prince Tshivhase, who died in May 1966 in a car accident when the former was still a minor; hence his initials are MKP.

(g) *Khosikhulu/ mahosimahulu* (pl.)

According to the colonial nomenclature *khosikhulu* (plural, *mahosimahulu*) is an equivalent of the colonial 'paramount chief'. Originally *mahosimahulu* are/ were territorial administrators who rule (d) through a lower level called *mahosi*. The territories under *mahosimahulu* are/ were defined by natural boundaries such as rivers, mountains, and so on (Nemudzivhaḁi, 2017: xix; Netshisaulu, interviewed 03 July 2018). Since the dawn of democracy in South Africa *mahosimahulu* are referred to as principal traditional leaders. Even though this level is included in the Traditional Leadership and Governance Frameworks Act (Act 41 of 2003), amended by Act 23 of 2009, it is absent in the Limpopo Traditional Leadership and Institutions Act (LITLIA) (Act 6 of 2005), amended by Act 4 of 2011, and thus it is not applicable in the Limpopo Province (Kutumela, interviewed, 01 August 2018).

(h) *Khosi/ mahosi* (pl.)

The colonial equivalent of a *khosi* (plural, *mahosi*) is 'chief' called senior traditional leader in the Traditional Leadership and Governance Frameworks Act (Act 41 of 2003), amended by Act 23 of 2009, and it is included in the LTLIA (Act 6 of 2005), amended by Act 4 of 2011 (Kutumela, interviewed on 01 August 2018). *Mahosi* ruled *mashango* (districts) which were smaller in size than territories and these were usually named after these *mahosi*, for example Ha-Mphephu (after Mphephu), Ha-Tshivhase (after Tshivhase), Ha-Mphaphuli (after Mphaphuli) and Ha-Rammbuḁa (after Rammbuḁa), to mention a few (Nemudzivhaḁi, 2017: xix; Netshisaulu, interviewed 03 July 2018). Therefore, *mahosi* ruled under *mahosimahulu*.

(i) *Gota/ magota* (pl.) or *khosana/ mahosana* or *vhamusanda*

Gota (pl. *magota*)/ *khosana* (pl. *mahosana*) or *vhamusanda* is/ was called a headman within the colonial and apartheid nomenclature, and is also referred to as such in democratic South Africa (Traditional Leadership and Governance Frameworks Act (Act 41 of 2003), amended by Act 23 of 2009) and LITLIA (Act 6 of 2005). The position is lower than a *khosi*. *Magota* are/ were responsible for the administration of smaller defined areas called *zwisi* (lands) which together constitute (d) *mashango*. *Magota*

administered under *mahosi* (Nemudzivhadi, 2017: xix; Netshisaulu, interviewed, 03 July 2018).

(j) *Mukoma/ vhakoma* (pl.)

Mukoma (pl. *vhakoma*) is also called a petty headman. These are/ were responsible for the administration of even smaller defined locations called *midzi* (villages) which together constituted *zwisi*. A *mukoma* administered under a *gota* (Nemudzivhadi, 2017: xix; Netshisaulu, interviewed, 03 July 2018). *Mukoma* appears in the Traditional Leadership and Governance Frameworks Act (Act 41 of 2003), amended by Act 23 of 2009, and the LTLIA (Act 6 of 2005), and amended by Act 4 of 2011.

Ironically as it sounds and given the colonial nomenclature as it had by then unfolded, Stayt (1968: 195) correctly avers that “the disintegrating effect of the contact of the Bavenda with the European seems likely to result in the total collapse of their social system.” However, the current researcher would rather not refer to this as a social system as it construes to mean that Vhavenda did not exist as an organised political entity. Of essence is that the socio-political system has stood the test of time (Shai, 2018: 270). The current researcher further argues that a socio-political organisation gives a true description of the affairs before their contact with the Europeans, as explicitly contained in these sources (HKN 1/1/49, 16N1/1/2, 1946, Ethnological Section: Memorandum on Dzunde lands amongst the Venda people, Zoupansberg, by van Warmelo; Department of Education and Training, “Venda Terminology and Orthography”, no. 3, 56, 109, 122 and 153; *The Republic of Venda*, 1984: 40; Van Warmelo, 1989: 2, 106, 252; Nethengwe, 2005: 17, 19, 20, 21, 22; Meij, 1976: 140, 157; Vhuromu, 1998: 7; Davenport, 45; Lukhaimane and Nemudzivhadi, n.d., 10; Kirkaldy, 2002: 333, 335 and 336 Mathivha, 1985: 121; Du Plessis, 1955: 122-127; Myburgh, 1981: 80).

2.2 From the reign of Makhado to the defeat and subjugation of Aḷilali

Mphephu

Earlier in the study, the current researcher mentioned that various groups descended into Venḁa at different periods. Therefore, homogenous as Vhaventḁa might appear to be as a people, it is common knowledge that they comprise a number of sub-groups or cultural/ language groups with different origins, customs and traditions. Among them are Vhangonḁa, Vhanyai, Vhambedzi, Vhaṭavhatsindi, Vhaḷea/ Vhaḷeya Vhaṭwanamba Vhalembethu/ Vhalembetu, Vhalovhedzi, Vhakwevho, Vhaluvhu, Vhalaudzi, Vhasenzi/ Vhasenzi (Masingo of legendary Ṭhohoyandḁou) and Vhalemba (Welcome to Venda, 1979: 1; Venḁa: A land of independence, a land of culture, n.d; Mabogo, 1990: 12; Nemudzivhaḁi, 1977: 7). As it has been mentioned earlier Vhangonḁa are historically believed to have settled in the vicinity around the 13th century. It is worth noting that Vhasenzi and Vhalemba appear last in the list of these sub-groups. This is because according to historical evidence they were the last to arrive in the area (Bureau for Information and Broadcasting, Venda Government, 1979: 1; Nemudzivhaḁi, 1985: 19; Nemudzivhaḁi, 1977: 5; Mabogo, 1990: 13). Ralushai and Gray (1977: 19) caution that research into the history of Vhaventḁa ‘tribes proper’, Vhangonḁa, is yet to be fully conducted, save to say that down the years all these sub-groups have assimilated into one Vhaventḁa people.

The legendary is credited with founding a strong, resilient and resistant Vhaventḁa people after arriving with his Masingo (also called the Singo dynasty or Vhasenzi) after crossing the Vhembe (Limpopo) River from the northern direction (probably the Great Lakes Region of Central Africa) at the turn of the 1700s; thereafter defeating and subjugating the various groups mentioned above. He then built Vhaventḁa to their greatest glory after he brought them into the Soutpansberg from across the Vhembe River (Welcome to Venḁa, Bureau for Information and Broadcasting, Venda Government, 1979: 1; Stayt, 1968: 11; Nemudzivhaḁi, 1977: ii; Nemudzivhaḁi, 1985: 19; Mabogo, 1990: 19). This was after he had first defeated and subjugated the aboriginal Vhangonḁa into which the powerful Masingo assimilated through intermarriage, thus leaving Vhangonḁa surviving in name only and being significant to Ṭhohoyandḁou and Masingo for ritual purposes. To support this assertion, Stayt (1968:

15) mentions that the golden age of Vhavenḁa was probably during the reign of Ṭhohoyanḁou. According to Mabogo (1990: 20) and Nemudzivhaḁi (2017: 20-21) the gradual erosion of the power of Vhavenḁa, although not really as significant as the period after the death of Makhado, was initiated by the coming into the area of hunters, traders and adventurers of all hues.

The current researcher is of the view that King Ramabulana, who ruled before King Makhado, is the one who initiated white occupation. Resultantly, power and authority declined when he allowed the white settlers to help him during succession dispute against his half-brother, Ramavhoya (Baramapulana or Bavenda tribe of Magato, Location Commission 1906-7; Bavenda: Makhado (Magato or Ramapulana Tribes, Native Affairs Department, 13 September 1926). This marked the establishment of the settlement of Schoemansdal (Oudedaal) before his death, when the threat to the Ramabulana dynasty started as *mahosi* were also forced to pay tribute to the white authorities (Baramapulana or Bavenda Tribe under Magato, Location Commission, 1906-7; Bavenda: Makhado (Magato or Ramapulana Tribes, Native Affairs Department, 13 September 1926). Nemudzvhaḁi (1977: 15) contends that the intervention by a white man in the succession affairs and dispute of the Ramabulana throne had serious repercussions in the history of Vhavenḁa monarchy because the advantages accrued therefrom were mainly personal and short-lived. The foregoing analysis reflects that inasmuch as conflicts have always been a key denominator of human relations, the history of *vuhosi* in the defunct Vhavenḁa homeland remains incomplete if it does not make reference to the influence of whites in the emergence and escalation of succession disputes.

As it was, on realising that the Afrikaners had expected more than he had bargained for after assisting him in ousting his half-brother, Ramavhoya, Ramabulana fled to Vuvha and later to Nngwekhulu. In this way he opened his land for further infiltration and control by the white man. Furthermore, this opened the area for the introduction of taxation by the white man instead of tribute to *Thovhele*, the former practice being foreign to Vhavenḁa value system. The crux of the introduction of all these measures was intended to gradually set in motion the subjugation of Vhavenḁa, which became

a source of friction and confrontation between the Schoemansdal residents and Vhavenda (Baramapulana or Bavenda Tribe under Magato, Location Commission, 1906-7; Bavenda: Makhado (Magato) or Ramapulana Tribes, Native Affairs Department, 13 September 1926; Nemudzuvhaḡi, 1977: 17).

It is worth noting that elsewhere Ramabulana is cited as the elder brother of his successor, Makhado, alongside Ramavhoya, who Ramabulana succeeded, and Madzhie (Baramapulana or Bavenda Tribe under Magato, Location Commission, 1906-7; Bavenda: Makhado (Magato) or Ramapulana Tribes, Native Affairs Department, 13 September 1926). Further research shows that Makhado was actually Ramabulana's biological son, and not his brother. This confusion is regrettable and understandable because Makhado was the son of one Limani who originally was meant to have been married by Ramavhoya, but was later married as Ramabulana's *dzekiso* wife (begetter of the successor; married by the goods from the community or those from the father of the potential successor). In essence Makhado was the biological son of Ramabulana and one Limani. Ramabulana and Ramavhoya were half-brothers from the same (and senior) house (Nemudzivhaḡi, 1977: 19).

The current researcher would like to advance that the most historic evidence of contact and/or relationships between Vhavenda and the whites (the Dutch/ Afrikaner and/ or English colonisers) took place after the ascension of Makhado to the kingship (*Thovhele*) position, 1864 to 1895 (Nemudzivhaḡi, 2017: 32; Mabogo, 1990: 21). By implication this study cannot identify as eventful a period as that after the historical contact between the whites and Makhado. During the reign of Makhado the relationship between Vhavenda and the whites was volatile as the latter was hell-bent on taking control of the land and enforcing a slave-master relationship (Baramapulana or Bavenda Tribe under Magato, Location Commission, 1906-7; Bavenda: Makhado (Magato or Ramapulana Tribes, Native Affairs Department, 13 September 1926). The result was that the reign of Makhado was the most eventful as he vehemently resisted the presence of the white settlers in Venda and refused to be subjugated by them, or allow them to take his land and even refused to acknowledge the establishment of Schoemansdal as their headquarters in his land.

Makhado's fierce resistance to land occupation and his incessant refusal to collect tax on behalf of the white authorities, instead of tribute accrued by him from his subjects, earned him the legendary name of "Lion of the North" (Baramapulana or Bavenda Tribe under Magato, Location Commission, 1906-7; Bavenda: Makhado (Magato or Ramapulana Tribes, Native Affairs Department, 13 September 1926). By this time, however, the white settlers had already decided that certain Vhavenda leaders had to supply cheap labour to the farms and also work as gun carriers. In addition it had been decided that other distant *mahosi* such as Mphaphuli, Rammbuda and Nelwamondo should pay tribute to white in the form of taxes and allow access to cheap black labour from among their people. According to Mabogo (1990: 20) from that period onwards the whites interfered in the succession disputes of the Ramabulana house on several occasions, like they did when Makhado was about to succeed Ramabulana. It is no wonder that after his ascension to power Makhado embarked on a crusade to rebuild the power of the Ramabulanas by annexing lost territory from those *mahosi* who had subjected themselves to whites. This further put Makhado on a collision course with the whites. What can be deduced from the foregoing analysis is that white interference in succession disputes within Vhavenda polity was not a once off event: it became a recurring historical feature of traditional political governance affairs.

By the time of Makhado's ascension to the kingship, Venda had three powerful *mahosi*: Makhado of the Ramabulana dynasty, Raluswielo of the breakaway Tshivhase dynasty and Makwarela of the Mphaphuli dynasty (Kirkaldy, 2004: 13; Nemudzivhadi, 2017: 63). Except for Makhado, these other rulers were actually breakaways who through the support of the whites had declared themselves independent *mahosi*, especially during the period surrounding the death of King Ramabulana, Makhado's father and predecessor, son of T̄hohoyandou. To support this claim, according to Schapera (1966: 64) the royal clans of Vhavenda are, with a few exceptions, genealogically related to one another since most of them claim descent from T̄hohoyandou. Under these *mahosi* were, according to Nemudzivhadi (2017: 68-69), so-called created *mahosi* who were recognised by the white authorities as independent from the main house of Ramabulana, to which they should have been paying allegiance or homage.

Delius, Maggs and Schoeman (2014: 45) aver that many polities were built around specific 'chieftainships' which were political units based on subjects of diverse, origins, united by allegiance to a particular ruling lineage as opposed to being primarily organised on the basis of kinship. Using the same assumption, one would still argue that given the close knit fabric that made the Ramabulana dynasty, this also helped to make Vhavenda a unique people. Referring to the Ramabulana dynasty, Schapera (1966: 64) ironically admits that 'tribal' divisions are to a small extent also cultural divisions that one might truly say that Vhavenda had been cut up into 'tribes' for the benefit of the ruling houses. One would then be tempted to further argue that these 'tribal' divisions were meant to make colonial administration more effective and consolidate power, thereby ensuring allegiance and security. Delius, Maggs and Schoeman (2014: 45) further say that the ability of powerful leaders and groups to offer protection in turbulent and dangerous times attracted adherents. In other words, in reference to the Ramabulana dynasty before the splits, this ensured that the area enjoyed a degree of tranquility.

Delius, Maggs and Schoeman (2014: 45) remind the reader that regardless of this political dynamism this kingdom and/or the 'chiefdoms' within were not immune to regular splits that were often related to succession struggles. In the same vein successful groupings also attracted a significant flow of followers: the more the followers or people, and not necessarily land, ensured a source of power. In other words the land might be bigger but pose a security risk if the population is/ was ridiculously small as compared to the size of the land. In addition the character of particular leaders as well as the quality of resources served as a boon to the power of a ruler. These authors further cite Vhavenda kingdom in the north and Bapedi kingdom in the east as the most significant in such dynamic political forms (Delius, Maggs and Schoeman, 2014: 45). Ironically, though, by the time that Makhado became the ruler of Venda, the divisions had been occasioned by the coming of the whites, as mentioned above, and the recognition of lesser leaders as independent *mahosi*, as a way of weakening the power of resistance of the Ramabulana polity. To this end the size of the land, the size of the community, military strength and prowess, natural resources, wealth in the form of live-stock and tribute as well as the number of headmen defined the status of the leadership.

Some sources are in agreement that the final subjugation of Vhavenda evidently happened after the defeat of *Thovhele* Alilali Mphephu, Makhado's successor and son, after the 'Mphephu-Boer War' (Wessman, 1900; Khangala, 1999; Nemudzivhadi, 1977; Stayt, 1968; Netsianda, 2001). It is against this background that the current researcher would like to point out that this signifies that at that point the relationship between Vhavenda and the whites had been dominated by confrontation. From this premise it suffices to say that there is a necessity to unpack the source (s) of this 'cold war' style of relationship between the two racial groups: Vhavenda and the whites (Afrikaners and/or English). However, it would be futile to embark on this study without initially putting focus on the nature of factors that enhanced the power and/ or authority of *mahosi* on the one hand and the main driving pointers of the quest for power in South Africa and the Soutpansberg District as well as the Venda area in particular on the other, especially at the beginning of Makhado's reign.

2.3 The Three Main *Mahosi* of Vhavenda at the Close of the 19th Century

The Mphephu-Boer War of 1898-1899 may be regarded as the beginning of the decline of the epitome of Vhavenda's resistance to white occupation of the land and its carving out into white commercial farms. This war eventually broke the fierce resistance of Vhavenda against white occupation and sent Alilali Mphephu into exile. By the time Alilali Mphephu was finally defeated and sent into exile, Venda was still dominated by three great royal families of Ramabulana, Tshivhase and Mphaphuli (HKN 1/1/49, 16N1/1/2, 2 October 1946, The secretary for Native Affairs, Dzunde lands: Sibasa; Commission of inquiry into Venda Vuhosi, Part 1, 1946: 209; Kirkaldy, 1999: 78; Nethengwe, 2005: 58-64, 76-86 and 98-104; Kirkaldy, 2003: 13; Nemudzivhadi, 1977: 20; Du Plessis, 1955: 121; "Vhavenda", 2009: 12-149; Khangala, 1999; Van Warmelo, 1940: 30 and 44). It is worth noting that by this time the original and historical status and title of *thovhele* which was associated with the Ramabulana dynasty had been eroded to the point where all *mahosi* mentioned above enjoyed equal status with the most senior house of Ramabulana.

This was further worsened by the wars of succession within these royal families. This situation eventually saw a number of the subordinate *mahosi* managing to establish themselves as independent rulers in varying degrees of status in their respective areas. Mention is made of Tshivhase, Kutama, Davhana, Sinthumule, Rammbuḁa and Nesengani (Lukhaimane, n.d.: 10; Dzivhani, Motenda and Mudau, 1940: 39-40, 44; Gottschling, 1905: 196; Mudau and Motenda, 1958: 76, 78, 79; Stayt, 1968: 15; Van Warmelo, 1940: 6, 12-24, 30-32 and 36). It is important to note that although there is mention of the three powerful houses which were a result of splits, some of *mahosi* that emerged did so with the assistance of the white authorities, especially during and after the era of Ramabulana, Makhado's father (Mabogo, 1990; Khangala, 1999; Nemudzivhaḁi, 1977 and 2017). On realizing the resilience of the Ramabulana dynasty the white authorities recognized breakaway subordinate *mahosi*; which proved enticing as it offered independence to the breakaways. In addition this was a strategic move as it assisted in weakening resistance to colonial imposition and occupation. Following this was indiscriminate extra-economic coercion, forced labour, forced crops, forced sales, forced contributions like tax and forced removals (Ntsebeza, 1999: 83) further breaking the socio-economic spine and independence of Vhavenda.

2.4 The Nature, Uniqueness and Diversity of *Vhuhosi* of Vhavenda

As it has been mentioned earlier, the nature of *vhuhosi* of Vhavenda, like others that suffered the impact of colonialism and apartheid, is a bit difficult and confusing to understand since the hierarchical nomenclature has been adversely distorted by colonialism and apartheid. The result has been that the hierarchical terminology of *vhuhosi* (and other traditional authorities elsewhere in South Africa) suited the objectives of segregation and apartheid administration. Apparently, the concept *thovhele*, an equivalent of the king of England or Holland and elsewhere, would have meant equating them to African rulers in status. The current researcher is of the view that seeing that the concept bore the semblance of power, as vested in western authority, would have been problematic for whites to use when referring to *vhuhosi*. As such the hegemonic influence of European languages and the dominance of Eurocentric discourses as well as perspective on African languages is seen with the adoption of the word 'chief', when referring to an African ruler instead of king (Maruma

oand Dhlwayo, n.d.: 1). Resultantly, other colonial concepts were coined such as 'paramount chief' (then called *khosikhulu* by whites) instead of *thovhele* (king), 'chief' for a particular leader of a specifically created Vhaventxa tribe of a territory and *gota* (headman) for a leader of a district or chief's councillor, as altered concepts of *vhuhosi* to serve colonial administrative purposes (Department of Education and Training, 1980: 56, 109, 122 and 153; Van Warmelo, 1989: 72, 106, 252; Ralushai, 1994: 1-12).

The above explains the assertion that *vhuhosi* "is connected to the territory under him than to the people he rules" because he has a number of sub-rulers below him and below them other sub-rulers (Commission of inquiry into Venda Vhuhosi; HKN 1/1/49, 16N1/1/2, 1946, Ethnological Section: Memorandum on Dzunde lands amongst the Venda people, Zoutpansberg, by van Warmelo). This affords the subjects an opportunity to have closer ties and contact with the sub-rulers, who are *magota*: a channel to the *mahosi* themselves. The above, however, gives one the impression that although this political arrangement might have been for administrative purposes, the question of safety and security of the ruler should also have been a primary objective. The above further paints a picture of an authority which is/ was absolute, exclusive to gender and bordered on tyranny. In this regard, Lebitse (*Sowetan*, Tuesday July 10, 2018: 15) posits that "tribal authority is signified by forced labour, forced removals, forced marriages and that people have no rights": the portrayal of *vhuhosi* of Vhaventxa and traditional leadership in general, especially by the missionaries (HKN 1/1/49, 16N1/1/2, 1946, Ethnological Section: Memorandum on Dzunde lands amongst the Venda people, Zoutpansberg, by van Warmelo, 1930: 11; Kirkaldy, 2003: 336; Kirkaldy, 2003: 79, 80; Kirkaldy, 2003: 182; Hofmeyr, 2000: 1058; Maselesele, 1990: 25).

However, the nature of *vhuhosi* of Vhaventxa is governed by the existence of four other figures regarded as equally important to the institution, who commanded as much authority and respect at all times. These are *makhadzi* (the ruler's sister), *khotsimunene* (the ruler's younger brother) also referred to as the *ndumi*, who in recent times may act as regent in the event of the death of the *khosi* until the new and legitimate ruler is installed (Appropriation Bill: (C), "Verbatim report (Hansard) of the Fourth Session of the Second Venda National; Assembly, Thohoyandou, vol. 29, no.

1, 20 March-17 September 1987: 240; De Beer, 2004: 105-109; Bloomhill, 1960: 46) Ramabulana, 1990: 5, 14; Maselesele, 1990: 2; Dangale, 1993: 16, 17). The *ndumi* is appointed together with *khadzi* (one who will assume the role of *makhadzi* in future) when the potential successor is installed; especially where there are several contenders to the throne. The *ndumi* and *khadzi* are closer to the new ruler in power and council. *Makhadzi* is not only respected by the subjects but has the great power even to determine who should be the successor (HKN 1/1/49, 16N1/1/2, 1946, Ethnological Section: Memorandum on Dzunde lands amongst the Venda people, Zoutpansberg, by Van Warmelo; Du Plessis, 1955: 125; Matshidze, 2013: 43, 140-187; Jeannerat, 1997: 94; Maselesele, 1990: 1; Nethengwe, 2005: 22-23; Ramabulana, 1990: 5).

Khadzi is usually the eldest half-sister of the potential ruler, usually the daughter of the second or even third wife or any junior house of the sitting ruler who will assume the position of *makhadzi* in future while *ndumi* is the future *khotsimunene* (Kirkaldy, 2003: 79,80, 182, 336; Stayt, 1968: 195, 196; Khangale, 1999: 6; Nethengwe, 2005: 22-23; Conerly, 1990: xviii and xix; Ramabulana, 1990: 5; Jeannerat, 1997: 94; Maselesele, 1990: 1). In putting emphasis on the relationship between *makhadzi* and the subjects/ community, Madonsela¹⁶ (*City Press Voices*, 5 June 2011: 7) advances that *makhadzi* is a buffer between the community and the *khosi*. Madonsela further avers that *makhadzi* gives the people a voice while equally giving the *khosi* a conscience such that a foolish leader ignores the wise counsel of *makhadzi* at his own peril, as he/ she will find himself/ herself walking alone. This clearly sums up the significant position and status of *makhadzi* within *vhuhosi* and institutions.

In addition to the above the authority of the *khosi* is/ was governed by unwritten laws and customs that passed from one generation to the next through word of mouth. This implies that what had been laid down by the forefathers, governed by Vhavenda value systems, commanded a lot of respect among the ruling Vhavenda royal family members and the community at large. In order to enforce these unwritten laws and

¹⁶ Professor Thuli Madonsela was South Africa's Public Protector between 16 October 2009 and 14 October 2016. She is presently Professor of Law and holds a chair of social justice at the University of Stellenbosch, a position she has held since January 2018.

customs there is/ was a Great Council, also referred to as the Royal Council (usually comprising the elders and *makhadzi*). Equally important members of the royal family are/ were responsible for advising the *khosi* on certain matters. These were usually the brothers of the *khosi*, his *magota* and paternal uncles who serve(ed) as a checks and balances of the system for the *khosi* so that he does not have a free reign over administration (VG, Venda Vuhosi Affairs, 1990: 134, 139, 141, 165; Venda Travelogue, 1989/90: 7, 9; Venda: Land of independence, n.p.; Benso, 1979: 40, 45).

Thus the Great Council is/was responsible for advising the *khosi* on political administration, judicial and economic matters. Within this Council were the *khoro/ kraal/ council* (an advisory body referred to as the people's parliament; which was open for attendance by every adult male), the *private council* (Privy Council) which comprised men of position and influence in the tribe for consultation by the *khosi*, and the 'tribal' council which consisted of the *khosi*, *magota* and members of the other councils (Nemudzivhadi, 1977: 23). This once more dispels the notion that *vuhosi* of Vhavenda is/ was absolute in nature. Although there is mention that the ruling made by the *khosi* is/ was the final word in matters that were legislative, in today's language, one would say that *mahosi* had ratifying powers. However, in the event that he was stepping into the shoes of a deceased predecessor he could have the power to decide cases only after "the bones of his predecessor had been buried in a final resting place"; with the advice of the council (VG, Venda Vuhosi Affairs, 1990: 134-139, 141, 165; Benso, 1979: 40, 45).

Emphatically, numerous authors maintain that *vuhosi* of Africans is exclusive nature according to gender, especially in relation to succession matters. This was conclusively regarded by various authors as undemocratic and violating the rights of women in the line of succession in the event of the death of *the khosi*. To this end, in the discussion on *vuhosi* of Vhavenda the current researcher was dictated to by sources to use the male pronoun. This is because the sources show no exception to the African rule of male lineage during succession which paints a picture of gender exclusivity within *vuhosi* of Vhavenda. However, as mentioned earlier there are female rulers in South Africa and among Vhavenda. However, even if there are female *mahosi* leaders among Vhavenda, custom and traditional practice does/ did not allow

a woman to be a *khosi* but only a *gota* (or headwoman in this case) (VG, Venda Vuhosi Affairs, 1990: 72-76, 87; Ralushai, interviewed on Phaphala FM, "Nḁevhetsini Actuality Programme", 14 June 2005; Interview with Tshithukhe, 14 May 2009; Conerly, 1990: xviii, xix; Dzivhani and Mudau, 1940: 18, 20 23, 34, 38, 68, 71; Van Warmelo, 1989: 98, 269; Jeannerat, 1997: 12). The argument of Vhavenda customary practice is that a female *khosi* poses a danger of diverting the lineage in the event that she be married out of royalty; hence this seemingly gender discriminating exclusion because it is/ was viewed as endangering the status which would be assumed by a commoner. Such incidents have been found to have happened especially among Vatsonga/ Shangaan people (Personal experience during oral evidence as a member of Limpopo Commission on Traditional Leadership Disputes and Claims, 2012-2017).

In contrast, a *gota* is of a lower status to that of *khosi* within the political organization of *vuhosi* of Vhavenda. Therefore, a female can/ could assume a position of authority but will/ would have lesser authority than the *khosi*; apparently making her a subordinate. In addition she can/ could only rule with the help of male advisers. However, the current researcher agrees that the status and powers of women becomes adversely affected as a result of this customary practice as it violates the rights of women to aspire to the highest position within *vuhosi*. Be that as it may some may argue that this arrangement is ageless and has been there from time immemorial and has to be adhered to unquestioningly. Therefore, juxtaposing it with the Constitution would be undermining African value systems upon which *vuhosi* of Vhavenda and institutions are founded or premised (VG, Vuhosi Affairs, 1990: 72-76; Myburgh, 1981: 84; Conerly, 1997; Nethengwe, 2005). Regardless of this it did not necessarily mean that women did not have any influence in other related matters as shown with *makhadzi* as the kingmaker during succession processes and as a very important councillor.

However, in the past and according to Vhavenda tradition *makhadzi* and *vhakoma* (the queen-mother) can/ could never be regent but only assist in appointing a *khotsimunene* to take that responsibility in the event that the *khosi* dies prematurely, leaving a minor as a successor until he comes of age (Myburgh, 1981: 81; Nethengwe, 2005: 170; Van Warmelo, 35-37; Wessman, 1900: 13-14; Maselesele, 1990: 3-9, 35-

44; Van Ryneveld, 1998: 20). The new Constitution of South Africa has been seen to be applicable in tandem with customary law as it has been in the N'wamitwas of Shangaan/ Vatsonga succession dispute, where a female succeeded her father as a *khosi* (*hosi* in Shangaan/ Xitsonga language). Even though the new democratic dispensation allows for females to ascend the throne as *mahosi*, most Vhavenda male rulers are still adamant that it cannot be done, arguing that the Constitution tends to violate and supercede the African values that underpin customary law. In short this has pitted the Constitution and customary law at the crossroads.

2.4.1 *Vhuhosi* and the administration of the land: Economic responsibilities

The *khosi* had a strong economic position especially with regards to the administration of land. The land is not supposed to be privately owned but is communally owned by the people although it is held in trust by *mahosi*. By virtue of being the trustee or overseer *mahosi* allocate the land to the subjects for various uses. As a result this makes the land useful and important for communal or collective uses such as grazing, drawing of water, fishing, timber and cultivation as well as agricultural production by the subjects for themselves and the royal family (a practice also referred to as *dzunde*¹⁷) burial and sand collection; some of which generate revenue for the *khosi* and his subjects (TAB, KLT, vol. 2/1/6, Native Locations, Mphephu's Location: Report from the Native Affairs Commissioner, Soutpansberg District, 12th September 1902; HKN 1/1/49, 16N1/1/2, 2 October 1946, The secretary for Native Affairs, Dzunde lands: Sibasa and Memorandum on Dzunde lands amongst the Venda people,

¹⁷ *Dzunde* is a practice where the community collectively plough, cultivate and produce from the piece of agricultural land of the *khosi*. This is not regarded as a dictated practice but a voluntary exercise for the welfare of the royal family. In the past, before the dawn of colonialism the size of the land is said to have been very excessive as it belonged to the senior *mahosi* hence it had to be worked by the subjects, not as an obligation but as part of allegiance or paying homage to the *khosi*. In "Ethnological section: Memorandum on *dzunde* lands among Vhavenda people, Zoutpansberg" by N.J. Van Warmelo, 1946, these are gardens of 'chiefs' and 'sub-chiefs' worked by free labour of their people. A proportion of the 'chief's' income is derived in kind from them and the *dzunde* forms part of the system of 'chieftainship' itself, so that 'chiefs' are inclined to become suspicious if questioned about them. In contrast *davha* is when the community assemble during the 'ploughing' season and collectively cultivate their fields: a communal practice.

Zoutpansberg; Van Warmelo, 1940: 16; Ralushai, 1979: 1, 8; Dzivhani and Mudau, 1940: 15-16; Lukhaimane and Nemudzivhadi, n.d.: 9; Dzivhani, 1940: 136-137; Nemudzivhadi, 1982: 108; Benso, 1979: 26; Jeannerat, 1985: 19; Ramudzuli, 1998: 30).

As a system of food production, *dzunde* was regarded as compulsory. It was also on a subsistence basis with the main source of income being yields of products, the increase in livestock, inheritance from the father of the *khosi*, fines and gifts or tributes. However, *mahosi* cannot/ could not use the wealth accrued arbitrarily. For example the *gota* would receive a proportion of the taxes and the most important family members as well as council members a part of the income of the *khosi* (NTS 7787 191/335. F1294. Chief Mphephu's (sic) complaint, 1905.10.18 at Louis Trichardt between Venda chiefs and Sir Arthur Lawley"; TAB, KLT, vol. 2/1/6, Native Locations, Mphephu's Location, 12th September 1902; SRP 6/33 U.G. 7-19. Report of the Department of Native Affairs for the years 1913-1918. Presented to both Houses of Parliament by the command of His Excellency the Governor-General: Tribal Trust Funds; Stayt, 1968: 217-218; Khangala, 1999: 14).

However, in some cases one identifies contradictions where it is claimed that according to Vhavenda tradition the land does not belong to an ordinary person or a nation but to a *khosi* as it was inherited from his forefathers. On the contrary, among Vhavenda private land ownership was never practiced. The land is not owned by the *khosi*, but he oversees it and acts on the advice of his *magota* on all issues, other than the land (Nethengwe, 2005: 170; Van Warmelo, 1940: 35-37; Wessman, 1900: 13-14; Maselesele, 1990: 3-9, 35-44). This is where a contradiction arises because if the land is owned by the *khosi*, not as a trustee or overseer, then the study identifies an element which goes against Vhavenda tradition, African tradition, and value systems as a whole. Relatively, Vhavenda tradition, which is an African tradition, in a way puts emphasis on sharing of communal resources such as land and forests, among others.

It is worth noting the periods during which most of the sources cited in the previous paragraph were written, by whom and for what purpose. Some sources were influenced by the obligation to government purposes and objectives whereas others were for lower academic levels such that the liberal and Eurocentric influence cannot

be ruled out. One source stands out though (Nethengwe, 2005) as the author is a member of the Thengwe Royal family by virtue of being one of the wives of *Khosi* Nethengwe of Thengwe Traditional Authority. Therefore the interest of this author to the subject of land cannot be ruled out as the same claims that according to Vhavenda tradition and African value systems private ownership of land by the ruler exists instead of the system of trusteeship. According to Vhavenda tradition the royal kraal of the *khosi* is located on the holdings of one of his *magota*. But the *khosi*, through his *gota* apportions the land to those at the lower levels of administration for dispensation to the people. Until confined to the locations Vhavenda have always had the freedom to live where they wished with the permission of the *gota* of the land to which they desired to move, in return for paying allegiance to the *khosi* of that territory ("Venda Verbatim Report (Hansard): Fourth Session of the Second Venda National Assembly, vol. 29, no. 1, 20 March- 17 September 1987: 237; Nefale, 1998: 10-13).

By virtue of his position as head of a territory *thovhele* selects land for his own and his village's needs and then allocates the rest to *magota*. The lower *mahosi* in turn allocate cultivable land to their subjects whereas grazing land remains(ed) communal; meaning that any member of the community may make use of it (Benso, 1979: 26; Warwick, 1994: 6; Stayt, 1968: ix, 166; Conerly, 1990: 10). In as far as land owned by the communities today (only a small part) is concerned this system still functions unaltered, but on state-owned allocated land there are limitations on the allocation of land to absentee tenants, on the number of cattle allowed on the land and on other misuses of the land. All members of the community retain their inalienable rights to cultivate the land. Notwithstanding population pressure on available resources, shortage of land has become a considerable problem in recent years; added to this is the result of the various legislation born out of colonialism, apartheid and democracy in South Africa (Benso, 1979: 26; Nefale, 1998: 10-13). Clearly these statements do not amount to private land ownership but rather land use: agricultural production, occupation and grazing. Therefore an interpretation to the contrary again raises issues that go against African value systems and the cultural tenets on which *vhuhosi* of Vhavenda and institutions is grounded. In short the current study argues that this notion that the *khosi* was a private owner of the land might have been arrived at by colonial administration as a way of manoeuvring the waters or to scale the walls in order to justify the practice of forced removal and the resultant private land ownership by white farmers at the

expense of communities, especially around the Soutpansberg area, as alluded to by Delius (24 June 2018: 1).

2.4.2. Religious responsibilities of *mahosi*

The power of the *khosi* is also religiously sanctioned. He is/ was regarded to have a close relationship with Raluvhimba, the 'Supreme Being' who calls the ruler his *muduhulu* (grandchild) and whom the *khosi* calls his *makhulu* (grandfather) (Mudau, 1940: 10-13; Benso, 1979: 25-26; Nǎdou, 1998: 20). The *khosi* is/ was a symbol of supreme secular and religious authority, the representative of his people on earth, also traditionally considered as the channel of communication between the natural and the supernatural; thus deserving of great respect. (Commission of Inquiry into Venda Vuhosi, 1990: 203; Nǎdou, 2000: 15). It was believed that only he could mediate with the ancestors on important matters such as drought and natural disasters, famine and war, or any other such misfortunes that may befall the community, as well as play a leading role in the fertility ceremonies associated with planting as well as harvesting (Mudau, 1940: 10-13; Myburgh, 1981: 80).

In other words the subjects looked to the *khosi* during such circumstances to mediate with the supernatural being on their behalf. By virtue of being the second most senior figure in the hierarchy of the royal family, *makhadzi* could also perform such rituals if need be, but through the permission of her brother, the *khosi* (*The Republic of Venda*, 1984: 45; Lestrade, 1932: 311-312; Kirkaldy, 2003: 332-334; Nethengwe, 2005: 113 and 115; Maselesele, 1990: 14; Khangala, 1999: 23). Accordingly those symbols of authority of *vuhosi* that are below the *khosi* operate as a result of the sanction of the authority from above. The *khosi* is also involved in all matters affecting initiation schools in his territory in the sense that he permits the running of such schools or organises them himself during initiation season (Mudau, 1940: 10-13; Ralushai, 1979: 10; Myburgh, 1981: 80).

2.4.3 Missionaries and *mahosi*

The discussions above mentioned shortly that the missionaries were always maintaining that they were acting as go-betweens for the government as well as *mahosi* and their communities: an impression that the missionaries occupied a position

of peace-makers and mediators. The current researcher would argue that the missionaries had their own interests which were not to benefit *mahosi* and their communities. To accentuate this Kirkaldy (2004: 14) mentions that the missionaries were not neutral observers because “what they saw was filtered through male, bourgeois, late nineteenth century, German, Christian missionary eyes”. Fick (July 13 to 19 2018: 34) avers that missionaries extended the project of categorising the world in their interactions with the indigenous people of the places they settled in, which afforded the conquerors a way to order the world, thereby controlling it more easily. The conspiratorial role of missionaries is very explicit in this sense. Significantly, this made them to stay arrogant and ignorant, either willingly or unwillingly, to the significance of African value systems *vis-à-vis* the socio-cultural significance of African religion. Halala (2011: 17-22) posits that missionaries were part of the Western destructive onslaught on African culture, wreaking havoc on African identity ever since because colonial rule involved force and disruption of indigenous cultures. Thus their aims were not primarily to benefit Africans. Furthermore, Fick (July 13-19 2018: 34) mentions that one Edward Said traced the processes by which imperialism, and by implication colonialism, and culture worked together to produce the knowledge systems by which indigenous people became classified, and how such classification became calcified over time; hence the differences noted by the settlers mattered and held sway.

According to Kirkaldy (2004: 14) the missionaries were duty bound to justify their presence in the Venda area - both to themselves and to their superiors and friends at home. Therefore, the claim of their responsibility to convert and civilise was loaded with hypocrisy and a ‘colonial-conquest’ hidden agenda. Ironically the missionaries were aided in their conspiracy by pliable *mahosi* and some converts who believed that being favourable to the missionaries on an advisory basis raised their prestige (Ndou, 2000: 3; Kirkaldy, 2004: 14; Halala, 2011: 22). On the one hand, some *mahosi* hoped that being closer and friendly to the missionaries would assist them in their resistant cause against white occupation and domination. On the other hand some *mahosi* were wary of the real intentions of missionaries. Kirkaldy (2004: 14) argues in this regard that although between 1872 and 1877 the missionaries succeeded in establishing stations at Ha-Tshivhase (at Beuster which is presently called Maungani) Tshakhuma and Georbenholtz (Makonde), the three great *Mahosi* Makhado, Tshivhase and

Mphaphuli were resistant to the founding of further stations in their areas or those of subordinate *mahosi* or *magota* for some time. The current researcher would like to advance that this is indicative of the fact that *mahosi* feared that the spread of Christianity through missionary work would be a blight on their own socio-cultural and political influence and economic independence. Halala (2011: 4) sums this by saying that Christian missions were embedded in the colonial system politically, economically and socio-culturally and thus violated the socio-cultural rights of Africans. However, Halala (2011: 22) adds that most Africans looked at benefitting through knowledge and skills to develop their economies. The current researcher argues that it remained to be seen if this really was paramount to the objectives of the missionaries.

To accentuate the above, Nǃdou (2000: 2) argues that right from the first contact with Vhavenǃa the missionaries never bothered to investigate their traditional religion in depth, which thus led to a relationship based on conflict and denigration. The same author further opines that the missionaries openly maintained, and even concluded, that black South Africans, Vhavenǃa included, were destined to be led, and not to lead: to be decided for by others and not to advance what they believed in. Therefore the events above were evidently aided by the attitude that influenced the work of the missionaries who were simultaneously eroding African value systems on which the nature of *vuhosi* was founded, by denigrating everything that the African associated with as they viewed it as uncivilized, barbaric and unchristian (Halala: 2011: 34). In support of this Makaulule (*Mail and Guardian*, May 4 to 10, 2018: 15) contends that the way the missionaries demonised and criticized our spirituality and our connection to the land made people turn away from their land and chase money. The current researcher maintains therefore that the missionaries' main objective was to destroy indigenous African culture and religion by converting them to an alien Western European religion: a blight on their original self and their indigenous knowledge systems. It is obvious at this point that the history of the missionaries is enmeshed with that of colonialism, conquest, subjugation, control and expansion (Halala, 2011: 4, 17 and 18). This is because at the height of missionary work was the height of colonialism as they aided the policy of colonialism in the cloak of "converting the Africans and letting them 'break away from their darkness and thus experience a rebirth'" (GG 31/498, 1205, Letter to Governor-General from the Berlin Missionary Society on the handling and control of taxation levies, 1932; Hofmeyr, 2000: 1029;

Kirkaldy, 1999 (a): 79-81 and (b) 2002: 5-8, 173-180, 188- 191, 269-275, 297-307; Mathivha, 1985: 86-88, 115, 232-233; Munyai, 1989: 8-12; Maselesele, 1990: 7, 15; Ndou, 1993: 40).

In their quest to achieve their paternalistic, hegemonic and dominant goals colonial powers claimed that “it was their Christian duty to ‘civilize the African’”. Hiding behind the cloak of education missionaries enjoyed the advantage to learn the language of the Africans whilst Africans got to learn theirs, *alas* for varying reasons (Government Archives, Sibasa, Box no. 148, File no. N. 2/2/2/3, Mission Reserves and Lands; GG 31/498, 1205, Letter to Governor-General from the Berlin Missionary Society on the handling and control of taxation levies, 1932; Ngou, 2000: 40). This in turn afforded the missionaries the advantage of acting in a ‘diplomatic’ capacity by ensuring good communication between *mahosi* and colonial authorities. In addition, it opened up access for colonial authorities to cheap African labour and the land: an important political and economic commodity to *mahosi* and their subjects (Government Archives, Sibasa, Box No. 148, File no. N2/2/2/2, 1958, Control of the people no more under the jurisdiction of the headmen and chiefs; File no. N2/2/2/1: Missionaries, go-betweens for government, Bantu Affairs Commissioner and the chiefs; File No. N2/2/2/1, Letter from the Native Commissioner, Sibasa to the Priest in Charge, Swiss Mission, Reserves and Farms). In essence *mahosi* and their communities were robbed of an important sentimental, political and economic commodity: the land.

In the same context, in his writing on ‘Vendaland’ in the late nineteenth century, while referring to Berlin missionaries Kirkaldy (2004: 12) reminds one of extreme forms of “*othering*” generally perpetuated by Europeans against Africans and *mahosi* of Vhavenda in particular. Thus African value laden traditional practices were supplanted by the coming of the missionaries as they regarded black South Africans as uncivilized. This was in their quest to ‘Christianise or convert’ them. Ironically the project of missionaries worked closely and in tandem with the colonisation project such that Africans, and black South Africans in particular, responded differently under different circumstances (GG 31/498, 1205, Letter from Governor-General’s Office, Cape Town to The Rev. G. Westphal, Letters from the Berlin Missionary Society, Georgholtz: 21st March, 31st March 1932; Box No. 148, File no. N2/2/2/3, Mission

Reserves and Lands; Box No. 148, File no. N2/2/2/2, Cutting of Trees; Box No. 148, File no. N2/2/2/2, Control of the people no more lay under the jurisdiction of the headmen and chiefs; Box No. 148, File no. N2/2/2/1, Letter from the Native Commissioner to the Priest in Charge, Swiss Mission, Valdezia, via Louis Trichardt, 11 November 1957; Box No. 148, File no. N2/2/2/3, Rights of Natives on the disputed ground at Beuster to reap crops; Madzivhandila, 1992: 10; Mathivha, 1985: 86-90, 93).

According to Burman (1981: 32) and Halala (2011: 57) by virtue of their 'calling' missionaries would go to the extent of preventing their converts from attending traditional functions or even challenged the authority of *mahosi*. As it was expected this sowed animosity and conflict between missionaries and *mahosi*, especially regarding the laws of succession. Burman (1981: 37) and Halala (2011: 105) further say that the missionaries' project 'adopted' the habits of Christianity and civilization, reminiscent of the sentiments raised by Kirkaldy (2004:13-14) who opines that to the missionaries culture and tradition were backward. This explains why they imposed their hegemonic Eurocentric influence on Africans and opposed their value system such that although on the one hand the three great *mahosi* of Venda resisted the founding of mission stations, on the other hand they felt that they needed the missionaries to mediate between them and "the encroaching whites". To this end one may aver that *mahosi* were too trusting to believe that missionaries could really mediate positively on their behalf at the expense of their own Europeans leaders. When everything had been said and done this is seen when *mahosi* themselves refused further establishment of missionary stations within their communities.

2.4.4. *Mahosi* and their role in legal matters

The discussion on the role and functions of *mahosi* clearly indicates that they were responsible for a number of tasks that were widely inclusive. These responsibilities included executive, judicial as well as legislative matters. This is a clear indication that the ruler had extensive powers. Turning to public law, one is especially reminded of the deep-rooted institution of *vhuhosi* and the people's share in the administration of justice as it was believed that the ruler was not amenable to judicial proceedings. The *khosi* is/ was divested of blameworthiness (responsibilities, accountability and imputability) and as the father of the community was dissociated from private law. Power over public land is not derived from the ownership thereof but from unwritten

laws that were passed on from generation to generation. It is as a result of this that there is no separation of the legislative, executive and judicial organs (Halala, 2011: 34; Ndou, 1998; Myburgh, 1981: 11, 81; Nethengwe, 2005: 162; Benso/RAU, 1979: 26; Scheepers-Strydom, 1967: 81; Mahosi, 2000: 1).

There is a clear degree of commonality in as far as this kind of inclusive administration of *vuhosi* of Vhaventxa is concerned. However, like Myburgh (1981: 78, 80-82) asserts about indigenous governance, the powers were governed by checks-and-balances. A *khosi* cannot/ could not make laws, fulfill judicial functions, or call an assembly of the people without his council's cooperation or knowledge (Nethengwe, 2005: 26). As such at the advice of his council, the *khosi* is/ was at once the lawgiver, the judicial head, and the highest executive officer of the subjects such that within each 'tribal division', he and his councillors fulfill(ed) both the judicial and administrative functions which according to De Wet Nel, Minister of Native Affairs in 1959, "ensured a standard of justice" (Myburgh, 1981: 82). As a result there is no notion of an abstract ruling figure, such as in the State of the West; the ruler, on behalf of the people, is the *khosi*. In this instance a 'tribe' or a 'tribal division' is not seen in the abstract as an administrative unit, but as jurisdictional area of a community (Myburgh, 1981: 79- 83; Nethengwe, 2005: 162; Benso, 1979: 26; Scheepers-Strydom, 1967: 81; Mahosi, 2000: 1).

The above indicates that the legal system operates(ed) like the political system as it is/was highly decentralized and consists(ed) of a hierarchy of the *Thovhele*, *Khosikhulu*, *khosi*, *gota* and the elders that helped to compose the Great Royal Council. At the end of the legal procedure the *thovhele/khosi* judges (ed) and summarizes (ed) the cases and pronounces (ed) his verdict which will/ would then be upheld at the advice of the council. It is as a result of the above that it is said that Vhaventxa have/ had a strong conception of justice, partly because of their inherent conception of right and wrong (Commission of Inquiry into Venda *Vuhosi* Affairs; Myburgh, 1981: 80-82; Nethengwe, 2005: 162; Benso/RAU, 1979: 26).

2.5 The Natives Land Act (Act No. 27 of 1913) and *Vhuhosi* of Vhavenḁa on the Eve of Apartheid: From Overseer and Controller to Supervisor

In the mid-nineteenth century the Afrikaners claimed that all the Africans in the territory north of the Vaal River were their subjects and subsequently liable to labour taxation. North of the Vaal River referred to what was later called the Transvaal (a collective equivalent to the present provinces of Gauteng, Mpumalanga, part of the western area of the North-West and Limpopo) (NTS 7787 191/335. F1294. Chief Mpepu's¹⁸ (sic) complaint; 1905 October 18 at Louis Trichardt between Venda chiefs and Sir Arthur Lawly; Mohlamme, 1999: 331). This translated into *mahosi* and their subjects, Vhavenḁa included, of different groups, who resided in the different areas of the said region becoming the subjects of the Afrikaners. It meant that *mahosi* of these communities and their authority vested in them from generation to generation, had from that moment become open to control, manipulation and monopoly by the Afrikaners. It also meant that the powers of *mahosi* were subject to the wishes of the Afrikaners. Thus, this marked the beginning of the erosion of the powers of *mahosi* and manipulation of their functions and responsibilities for the benefit of the foreigners and missionaries.

In the case of Vhavenḁa the loss of control over land administration which resulted from the defeat and subsequent subjugation of Alilali Mphephu and his people after the "Mphephu-Boer War of 1895-1898" was followed by loss of his ancestral land; this included sacred places like the burial sites at Songozwi/ Sunguzwi (Khangala, 1999: 23; Netsianda, 2001: 70; Conerly, 1990: 70). The forced removals, dispossession and relocation was followed right at its heels by the Lands Disposal Ordinance of 1902 and later the Natives Land Act No. 27 of 1913 (Conerly, 1990: 70). In the event was the fact that the land rights of black South Africans, and Vhavenḁa in particular, were

¹⁸ Just like other Tshivenda names mentioned earlier Mphephu was usually corrupted to Mpepu or Mpefu, by the colonial and apartheid powers as well as missionaries as part of Eurocentric hegemony on African languages. Therefore where it appears in a corrupted version it is necessary to cite as such for the next person to be able to identify the source(s) where necessary and applicable.

eventually limited as their right to land was determined and governed by the laws of the white government by first looking at its (mainly economic) own interests and those of its people. (TAB, KLT, Vol. no. 2/1/6, Native Locations. Mphephu's Location: Report from the Native Affairs Commissioner, Soutpansberg District, 12th September 1902; HKN 1/1/49, 16 N1/1/2, Memorandum on Dzunde lands amongst the Venda people, Zoutpansberg by N.J. van Warmelo, 1946; Khangala, 1999: 23; Netsianda, 2001: 70; Conerly, 1990: 70).

The Ordinance of 1902 and the Land Act of 1913 outlawed land ownership by black South Africans and *mahosi* thereby reducing the size of the land under their jurisdiction and rendering them politically and economically powerless. The foregoing observation should be understood within the context of the closer relationship between politics and economics (GG 1542, 50/381, 1914, Natives Land Act; *The Cape Argus*, Saturday, February, 14, 1914; TAB, KLT, vol. no. 2/1/6, Native Locations. Mphephu's Location: Report from the Native Affairs Commissioner, Soutpansberg District, 12th September 1902; Netsianda, 2001; Conerly, 1990: 70; Nefale, 1998: 10-13; SA LDE 202 1082/17. Secretary for Lands- Secretary to Location Commission, 1906.01.12; TA GOV 1089 PS 50/8/1907. Location Commission, 38/06. Report of Native Location Commission on the location for Chief Mpefu (sic). Pretoria, 1907.04.08).

Importantly, the status of Alilali Mphephu as a *thovhele* had by this time been reduced and equal positions as his created for his half-brothers Sinthumule and Kutama who had laid claim to his throne after he had been eventually installed after the death of Makhado. In this regard, Sinthumule and Kutama were duly assisted by the Afrikaner administration, in their quest for independence, who sought to further divide and weaken the opposition of Vhavenḁa to land dispossession and white occupation (NTS 337, 73/55, 1938-1950, Chieftainship of the Venda Tribe, Letter from the Naive Commissioner to The Chief Native Commissioner; Union of South Africa, Letter from the Office of the Chief Native Commissioner, Pietersburg, 3rd November, 1949 to The Secretary for Native Affairs, Pretoria, 7 November 1949).

These developments worked very positively for the segregation and colonial policy of the white administration. Instead of his erstwhile brothers serving under him as his lieutenants, just as it was during the era of Thohoyandou, Ramabulana and Makhado,

in that order, Alilali Mphephu's position had been reduced to a lower level of *khosi*, a level equal to other *mahosi* such as Rammbuḁa, Tshivhase, Davhana, Nethengwe, Mphaphuli and Nelwamondo, among others; which went against African and Vhaventḁa value systems. These *mahosi* now administered their respective subjects at the behest of the white government and further supervised their subjects as pools of cheap black labour for the white commercial farms that had been established on the historical and original land of the Vhaventḁa: the land that had been declared through the Lands Disposal Ordinance of 1902 and the Land Act of 1913, respectively (NTS 337, 73/55, 1938-1950, 7 November 1949: 2; Box No. 148 File no. N2/2/2/2, Missionaries to act as go between for the government and/or the Bantu Affairs Commissioner; Box No. 148 File no. N2/2/2/1, Letter from the Native Commissioner, Sibasa, to the Priest in Charge, Swiss Mission; Box No. 148 File no. N2/2/2/3, Letter form Additional Native Commissioner, Louis Trichardt in relation to the disputed ground at Beuster, Sibasa; Mahosi, 2000: 2). The irony is that royalty was at the whim of ordinary people, the white authorities, missionaries and other *mahosi* that were created and imposed on communities. Thus, in essence the authority and legitimacy of *mahosi* was at the mercy of the white government who greatly disregarded and violated Vhaventḁa tradition and customary law of succession of which the foundation was African value systems.

In the event, was that they employed the assistance of Vatsonga/ Machangana people against Makhado, just like they equally did when they pitted brother against brother to act as proxies to fight their wars. A stark reminder is that of Kutama and Sinthumule who were pitted against Alilali Mphephu, all being his junior half-brothers and sons of Makhado, and/ or Makhado against Davhana before them (TAB, KLT, Vol. no. 2/1/6, Native Locations. Mphephu's Location: Report from the Native Affairs Commissioner, Soutpansberg District, 12th September 1902; Box No. 148 File no. N2/2/2/2, Control of people placed under the jurisdiction of the missionaries who were granted more powers than the chiefs and headmen; Box No. 148 File no. N2/2/2/2, Missionaries: go-betweens for the government and/or the Bantu Affairs Commissioner; Box No. 148 File no. N2/2/2/1, Letter from the Native Commissioner, Sibasa, to the Priest in Charge, Swiss Mission; Box No. 148 File no. N2/2/2/3, Letter form Additional Native Commissioner, Louis Trichardt in relation to the disputed ground at Beuster, Sibasa;

Netsianda, 2001: 38-45; Conerly, 1990: 63; Mahosi, 2000: 2). This argument can further be consolidated by incidents where the Afrikaners even employed Bakgatla as auxiliaries in their wars against other African groups (Mohlamme, 1999: 331).

At the centre of the friction between Aḷilali Mphephu, his brothers and the Afrikaners was the resettlement of Mphephu and his subjects in the barren and rocky Nzhelele valley, the acquisition by whites of the fertile lands around Songozwi Mountains by the Afrikaners, the 'search for autonomy' and land of their own by Kutama and Sinthumule, and the final subjugation by the Afrikaners of Aḷilali Mphephu and his subjects. This was in essence achieved by sub-dividing Aḷilali Mphephu's polity among his brothers and half-brothers after 1898 (TAB, KLT, vol. 2/1/6, Native Locations, 06 April 1907; TAB, KLT, Vol. 2/1/6, Native Locations, 13 August 1904; TAB, KLT, Vol. 2/1/6, Native Locations, 9th November 1904; Netsianda, 2001: 35, 40, 41, 46-50; Conerly, 1990: 63-71; Nemudzivhaḷi, 1977: 98, 99, 169; Nefale, 1998, 7-9; Giesekke, 2004: 40). It is obvious from this account that at this point the whites exploited the internal strife within the Ramabulana dynasty to further divide them and thus render opposition to their presence and rapacious expansion over the land impossible if not redundant.

In surmise the overall benefactors of the whole project of the forced removals, dispossession and relocation process were Tshivhase, Mphaphuli, Rammbuḷa, Sinthumule, Nesengani (written as Nesengane in Conerly), Davhana and Kutama (TAB, KLT, 2/1/6, Native Locations, 13th August 1904; TAB, KLT, 2/1/6, Native Locations, 12th September 1902; TAB, KLT, Native Locations, 06 April 1907; Netsianda, 2001: 38-41; Nemudzivhadi, 1977: 169; Conerly, 1990: 69). These individuals were designated into the status of 'independent chiefs' in the land which use to be under the overall jurisdiction of Ṭhohoyandou, Ramabulana, Makhado and Aḷilali Mphephu, in that order. Thus, at this point the individuals mentioned above had been appointed to positions of power at the expense of Aḷilali Mphephu. As a result there emerged three powerful traditional authorities in the north-eastern Transvaal: those of Ramabulana (Mphephu), Tshivhase and Mphaphuli; needless to mention that Ramabulana and Tshivhase are/ were half-brothers by virtue of descending from Ṭhohoyandou. Accompanying this was the evolution of several less-powerful entities such as Nelwamondo of Lwamondo, Madzivhandila at Tshakhuma, Ravhura at

Makonde, Nesengani in the south-eastern part of Venda at Davhana and Rammbuda in the north-eastern part Venda in Dzimauli and many others (NTS 7787, File No. 191/335, Chief Mphephu's complaint: Memorandum of proceedings at an indaba held on 1905.10.18 at Louis Trichardt, between Venda chiefs and Sir Arthur Lawly; Conerly, 1990: 101; Netsianda, 2001: 49-50).

The discussion on the collapse of Alilali Mphephu's kingdom is a stark reminder of the nature of the relationship between *vhuhosi* of Vhavenda and the colonial government on the eve of apartheid. It is also indicative of how the Ramabulana dynasty's resistance to land dispossession, occupation and relocation influenced the relations between Vhavenda and the colonisers, and later the apartheid authorities. This also shows how *vhuhosi* and institutions were undermined and used as well as manipulated at the altar of political expediency. The dusk in these developments was easy to fathom during the era of Alilali Mphephu, Makhado's successor, whose authority was eventually brought to its knees, signalling the final subjugation of Vhavenda which was accompanied by reduction in status, the erosion of powers and authority, the stripping of traditional functions of which the land was central, other responsibilities as well as the respect and allegiance he enjoyed (SA URU 187 1091: Minute 1091 dd. 1914.04.01 from Prime Minister's Office to Wolf and Simpson. Sale of Chief Mpefu in trust for his tribe portions of farm Seville no. 2539. District Zoutpansberg; Netsianda, 2001: 49-50; Khangala, 1999: 15).

According to Conerly (1990: 101) when *Khosi* Patrick Ramaano Mbulaheni Mphephu Ramabulana's predecessor (hereafter called Patrick Mphephu) and father, George Mbulaheni Mphephu Ramabulana, granted land to Louis Trichardt and Andries Potgieter in 1936 he knew nothing of the differences between white and African value systems on land ownership and tenure. However, it is quite apparent that on the one hand Trichardt as well as Potgieter were privy to what they were bargaining for while on the other George Mbulaheni was not. Their real objective was land acquisition, ownership, control and tenure whereas to George Mbulaheni land was held in trust for the people and was not meant for private ownership (Delius, 24 June 2018: 1). In the ultimate, cultural differences became apparent when George Mbulaheni realised that the government of the settlers had come to stay; that they were not ready to subject

themselves to him as it was customary, based on African cultural value systems. Instead he was to be eventually subjected to them (Conerly, 1990: 101).

Similarly, earlier on 31 March 1926, Nesengani (Davhana) received 'permission' to occupy and move his immediate family to newly designated land of Davhana Location (the current researcher would rather call it instruction) from Mpheni near Louis Trichardt, only to discover that the best water in the highlands did not belong to him as it belonged to the white farmers and was being used by the missionaries nearby. As Fick (July 13 to 19, 2018: 34) bluntly puts it missionaries, linguists and military officials categorized the world in their interactions as conquerors; thereby controlling it more easily. The role and interests of the missionaries in this instance cannot be over-emphasised as they greatly contributed to these boundary changes (See also NTS 7787, 191/335, F1294. Chief Mpefu (sic) complaint, 1905.10.18; Nemudzivhadi, 1985: 26; Conerly 1990: 101). The powers that be enjoyed the leverage to levy taxes and enforce tribute labour for the white settlers, which was actually cheap black labour. This ultimately affected the African value systems which were fundamental to the political, social and economic dynamics of *vuhosi* and the communal essence to which communities were affiliated (NTS 7787, 191/335, F1294. Chief Mpefu (sic) complaint, 1905.10.18; Nemudzivhadi, 1985: 26; Mbeki, "Address to the National House of Traditional Leaders", Ulundi, 3 August 2001, p. 1).

2.6 Conclusion

This chapter looked at the relationship between *vuhosi* and the South African government from the era of colonialism: on the eve of apartheid and the homeland policy. In the same vein this chapter attempted to argue that the said relationship was mainly based on conquest, subjugation, paternalism, hegemonic control and domination. Conquest, subjugation, paternalism, hegemonic control and domination equally influenced the imposition of taxes, forced removal of black South Africans from their historical land, the subjection of *mahosi* and the creation of a pool for cheap black labour for white commercial farms. As a result *mahosi* were transformed into docile collaborators and acquiescent lame ducks as well as agents of colonialism. Equally, legitimate *mahosi* who were regarded as recalcitrant and non-compliant were deposed and/ or removed from their positions whereafter they were replaced by collaborative

and obsequious ones, usually brothers and/ or half-brothers. This went against the tenets of *vhuhosi* and institutions which were grounded on traditional legitimacy and value systems. The actions of foreign powers gradually, if not surely and rapidly, inflicted an assault on the African value-laden status of *vhuhosi* to suite European imperial and colonial policy of the “Scramble of the African Continent”.

The “Scramble of the African Continent”, was the rapacious carving out and indiscriminate sharing out of various regional portions of many kingdoms within the African continent by European powers in their quest for imperial dominance and to feed their industrial revolution after many years of continental wars of dominance. This imperial exercise was given credence by the Berlin Conference of 1884-1885 (Schraeder, 2000: 88, 117; Shillington, 2012: 314). The Conference duly declared Africa a ‘no man’s land or *terra nullius* to be cobbled’ out among colonial powers (Neluvhalani¹⁹, 2018: 32), with South Africa being competed for between the Dutch (Netherlands) and the British colonial and/ or imperial authorities. According to Rodney (1981: 22) under colonialism the conquest and ownership of the land was complete and backed by military domination.

This chapter also clarified the different hierarchical concepts that defined the social-political organization of *vhuhosi* of Vhavenda which were also not spared the assault from colonial and apartheid powers as they went about demeaning the original status of the indigenous administration: *thovhele*, *khosikhulu*, *khosi*, *gota* and *mukoma*. Interfering with the essence of these concepts also assisted in diluting their fabric in the eyes of Vhavenda and the government; for different reasons of course. Resultantly from the reign of Makhado to the demise of Alilali Mphephu after the Mphephu-Boer War of 1898-1899 at the close of the 19th (nineteenth) century, the titles of *thovhele* and *khosikhulu* had been done away with and *khosi* remained at the apex of the other lower levels. Equally this implied that the Ramabulana family had been lowered in

¹⁹ Dr. Matshikiri Vele Christopher Neluvhalani was a senior government official and educationist in the former Venda homeland government. The source cited is a published version of his Doctoral Degree thesis in African Studies that was conferred to him at the University of Venda, Thohoyandou, Limpopo Province of South Africa on 17 May 2017.

status to be on the same level with other emerging houses of Tshivhase and Mphaphuli, among others.

Regardless of all this the study discussed the administrative responsibilities of *vhuhosi* and institutions before the dawn of colonialism. These were political, social, economic, legal and religious. This indicated that much as the foreign powers claimed to operate within the confines of these mandates, the same applies(d) in as far as *vhuhosi* and institutions were concerned. However, the religious aspect was assumed by the missionaries with the other aspects taken over by colonial and later apartheid powers, *alas* from a paternalistic perspective with the assistance of collaborative *mahosi* as the servants of the powers that be. The Achilles heel was the forced removals and taking over of the control of the land with *mahosi* acting as supervisors thereof for the colonial and apartheid powers. The infamous Land Act of 1913 made sure that this went according to the plan of the government of the day. Thus the discussion attempted to argue that the relationship was based on conquest, subjugation, paternalism, hegemonic control and domination.

The development of ethnic identity within apartheid South Africa's homeland system owes its origin, one way or another, to the issues that were discussed in this chapter. Having said that and flowing therefrom the next chapter sets its sights on the development of ethnic identity *vis-à-vis* the influence of ethnic identity on *vhuhosi* and institutions of Vhavenda during the period surrounding the establishment of Vhavenda homeland.

Chapter 3

The Development of Ethnic Identity within South Africa's Homeland System: The Case of Vhavenda Ethnic Identity

3.1 Introduction

According to Rodney (1981: 22) under colonialism the conquest and ownership of land was backed by and completed through military domination which happened alongside the excuse that Africa was a "dark continent". However, the current researcher would like to argue that driven by 'racial-political monomania', the principal objective for the imperial and/or colonial authorities was to subjugate, conquer and dominate Africans. Thus the colonial powers were obsessed with one thing and one thing only, the racist taking over of the control of the political destiny of Africans in their quest for imperial dominance to feed their industrial revolution after years of incessant continental wars of aggrandisement. Thus conquest, subjugation and hegemonic control became the political '*lingua franca*' of the European powers. The current researcher would also like to advance that based on the discussion in the previous chapter, this lays bare or denudes the attitude of European powers towards Africans as they rapaciously claimed a stake of the African continent for individual imperial gain.

Shillington (2012: 312) postulates that the rapid colonial conquest of Africa was possible mainly because colonialists were able to exploit traditional and long-standing rivalries between and/ or within African polities. In this instance one is inclined to remind how the Afrikaners were able to exploit the rivalry that was prevalent, for example, within the Ramabulana ruling family, especially after the demise of Thohoyandou. In the same vein they conspiratorially assisted one half-brother to establish an independent polity against the other *ad nauseam*, regardless of the brothers' consanguineous affinity. These developments went a long way in weakening the once powerful Ramabulana family of Vhavenda, making it to eventually split into a smaller, and even, weaker grouping which they expediently referred to as 'tribes' of

“Mpefu (sic Mphephu), Sintumula²⁰ (sic Sinthumule), Chiwase (sic Tshivhase) and Ndhabane (sic Davhana) (R 11201/99, C.R. 5219/99). History: The Makhado/ Magato or Ramabulana Tribes: Mpefu- Sintumula- Maemu- Ndhabane, 1899). Shillington (2012: 312) further mentions that as a result of the resultant weaknesses some African rulers accepted the alliance with the Europeans or treaties of ‘protection’ so that they may be protected against and from potential enemies, who were ironically blood related. In South Africa numerous treaties of ‘protection’ were concluded with either the British and/ or the Dutch/ Afrikaners, as they both competed for the hegemonic domination of black South Africans and control of their land. It was only after such a ‘potential enemy’ had been annihilated that it then became clear to the beguiled party (ies) that they had signed away their ‘birth-right’: their historical land which is/ was “foundational to African identity... without which its ownership a people abandons its claim to be real Africans” (Mabandla, *City Press Voices*, Sunday 1 July 2018: 1).

Another important factor that allowed the Europeans to eventually prevail against resistant African rulers and their communities was the military advantage they had over the latter (Schraeder, 2000: 98-103; Shillington, 2012: 312-313). The use of military technology became important once the white powers realised that Africans were more than prepared to hold their own against their would be European conquerors. In addition, some African rulers were weakened by the quest for domination over their own as they usually befriended the British and/ or the Boers with the hope of accumulating guns that they believed would make them invincible against their adversaries. A case in point is that of Makhado of Vhvenḁa who befriended the white settlers of Schoemansdal with the ultimate objective of assembling guns to be used against his rivals when he wanted to reconsolidate his hegemony over the whole of Venḁa. However, Makhado proved to be a shrewd leader because he never allowed his adversaries to ride on the crest of the wave. Between 1865 and 1867, Makhado succeeded in chasing the white settlers from Venḁa after they had been able to have the upper hand against his predecessor father, Ramabulana, who gave them land to

²⁰ As it was mentioned in the previous chapter Europeans had the hegemonic audacity to corrupt African names. Therefore, the names that appear in brackets are in the correct spelling while those outside the brackets represent corrupted versions: see Mpefu, Chiwase, Sintumula and Ndhabane.

establish their headquarters at Schoemansdal (Stayt, 1968; Nemudzivhaḡi, 2017; 62-107). It is a historical fact that Makhado resisted the hegemonic presence of the settlers to the bitter end and attempted 'by hook or by crook' to prevent them from returning to Schoemansdal, until they managed to use his half-brothers to conspire against him and eventually poison him to death (Nemudzivhaḡi, 1977 and 2017; Khangala, 1999).

South Africa's history calendar of violent resistance against colonial occupation and domination is equally littered with such incidents of black South Africans vehemently standing their ground against white conquest, subjugation, occupation and control: the Wars of Dispossession in the Eastern and Western Cape (then referred to by the white authorities as the Kei area) where AmaXhosa resisted land occupation; the Bambatha Rebellion; the Battle of Isandlwana between the British and AmaZulu; King Sekhukhune of Bapedi going on the offensive against the British and later Afrikaner authorities; Makhado's resistance against Boer land occupation and control; as well as the famous Mphephu-Boer War of 1895 to 1899, to mention a few. This short discussion is indicative of the fact that just like Makhado of Vhavenḡa, who resisted the occupation and control of his land by the white authorities, there were other African rulers throughout the centuries who stood their ground against colonialism (Shillington, 2012: 312; Schraeder, 2000: 98-103; Worden, 1994: 19). Although this shows that South Africa's resistance had a fair share of recalcitrant rulers, this is not to deny that there were weakest links of collaborative rulers who diluted and immobilised the resistance against white occupation and control.

It is apparent that from these numerous historical incidents of resistance against colonial occupation it became clear to white authorities (be they British or Dutch) that black South Africans were not easy targets of white domination and assimilation and that they had the potential to stage political resistance. It is therefore not surprising that the future policy of white authorities on black South Africans held that accompanying forced removals and occupation would be the division of African communities into ten distinct ethnic, cultural and language groups in line with the establishment of reserves and the dawn of apartheid in 1948. In essence, the

development of ethnic identity as an instrument of racial policy was the political division of black South Africans which was the icing on the cake for the establishment and entrenchment of the policy of separate development: the vanguard of the racial and ethnic homeland system. The white authorities overcame black South Africans through political divisions through which they gave racial groups a separate sense of 'nationhood' based on a political mission to maintain ethnic identity in separate 'group areas'. The current researcher believes that a background discussion on identity, *ethnicity* and *ethnic identity* is necessary before traversing to a discussion on the development of Vhavenḁa ethnic identity, which is the subject of this chapter.

3.2 A Discussion of Identity

This chapter engages in a discussion on identity, the development of ethnicity and ethnic identity so as to lead to the one on the nature and role of Vhavenḁa ethnic identity in the establishment of Vhavenḁa homeland. In this regard it is worth noting that discussions on the question of identity, ethnicity, ethnic identity, ethnic group and the development of 'tribe' and 'ethnic nationalism' abound (SPP, 1983, vol. 5; Bekker, 1993; Smith, 1998; Degenaar, 1993; Cornell and Hartmann, 1998; Jenkins, 1997; Driedger, 1989; Hammond-Tooke, 1997; Van Binsbergen, 1995 and 1997), among a others. It is for this reason that the current researcher is of the view that before embarking on the discussion of the nature and influence of Vhavenḁa ethnic identity it would be prudent to make reference to various explanations on identity by other scholars and authors. Gleason (1983: 911) indicates that *identity* derives from the Latin word *idem* which in simple terms has the same connotation that deals with distinguishing an individual and/ or groups from others such that it was later adopted and even adapted into identity in the English language.

Furthermore, the current researcher contends that most authors appear to take it for granted that whoever reads about the concept *identity* believe that they understand its meaning although, it is problematic to come up with its exact meaning; see the various explanations advanced (Gleason, 1983; SPP, 1983, volume 5; Bekker, 1993; Smith, 1998; Cornell and Hartman, 1998; Degenaar, 1987; Jenkins, 1997; Driedger, 1997;

Hammond-Tooke, 1985 and 1997; Van Binsbergen, 1995 and 1997; Mashige, 2004; Mackenzie, 1978; Eriksen, 1993). Gleason (1983: 922) points out that the popularization of the concept identity began well before the turbulence of the mid- and late 1960s and attributes this initial popularization to the mid-century prestige and cognitive authority of the social sciences, the wartime and post-war vogue of national character studies, and the post-war critique of mass society which, as the author puts it, newly problematized the "relationship of the individual to society". Eriksen (1993: 13) characterizes identity as "a process 'located' in the core of the individual and yet also in the core of his communal culture, a process which establishes... the identity of those two identities", also referred to as a post-war phenomenon.

It flows from above that the concept of identity has been debated under numerous circumstances and at different times since it was influenced by socio-political circumstances. Based on the assertions above the concept *identity* has seen some adventurous theoretical conceptions sketched in their most grounded forms (Hall, in du Gay, Evans and Redman (eds.), 1998: 15-17; Bhabha, du Gay, Evans and Redman (eds.), 1998: 95, 99; Mashige, 2004: 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 9, 10 and 12; Mackenzie, 1970: 12, 22, 24 and 30; Young, 1976 and 1979: 5, 20, 41 and 43; Radithlalo, 2002: 2-3). It is from this premise that the current researcher opines that *identity* cannot be constructed on its own without it being located within cultural, social and political connotations. Hall and Du Gay (1996: cover page), further assert that identities which define the social world are based on gender, sexuality, ethnicity, race, class and nationality. Explicitly put, the central objective of *identity* is to distinguish one or a group from another/ the other according to culture, experiences and situations while being cognisant of the fact that *identity* exists within or outside the other. This also means that *identity* is circumstantially situated while it has the capability to be adaptable and changeable as a result of social contact and/ or interaction with others. In this regard Netshisaulu (interviewed on 24 August 2010) averred that "...I am Muvenda because I speak Tshivenda and my culture is Tshivenda." This summarily explains that *identity* is founded on particular elements or markers, as is discussed later.

Hall and Du Gay (1996: cover page) opine that *identity* is a concept which operates "under erasure" and change, apparently meaning that the concept *identity* is subject

to circumstantial influence and conditions, such that it cannot be expected to always assume its originality and rigidity because it is about the politics of location, social conditions and behaviour. Because aspects such as politics are dynamic and circumstantial they have the propensity to influence the nature of identity. Hall and Du Gay (1996: 11) further contend that: "...In common sense language, identification is constructed on the back of a recognition of some common origin or shared characteristics with another person or group, or with an ideal, and with the natural closure of solidarity and allegiance established on this foundation...it is a construction, a process never completed- always 'in process...a strategic and positional one and does not signal that stable core of the self'".

It is as a result of the above that the current researcher understands *identity* and the processes that go with it as a quest for belonging to, the search for 'otherness', which is situational or the constructed self that is determined by external influences such as culture or politics, language, common history and ancestry (Vander Zanden, 1979: 124; Schalk, 2000: 2). In other words *identity* focuses on the society (which is a cultural whole) and the characteristics that make them see each other as the self which is different from the other. However, it becomes evident in the works of Hall in Du Gay, Evans and Redman, (1996: 15-30), Hall and Du Gay (1996: 1-18), Bhabha, in Du Gay, Evans and Redman (1996: 95-101), Mashige (2004: 10), Mackenzie, (1978: 19, 27), Hall in Hall and Du Gay (1996: 1-17), Radithlalo (2002: 5-7), Bauman in Hall and Du Gay (1996: 18, 36), Robins in Hall and Du Gay (1996: 61-86) and Grossberg in Hall and Du Gay (1996: 87-107), for example, that "identities which define the social and cultural world have assumed new and wider forms as a result of the continual processes of change."

Arguments and discourses resident in the sources mentioned above on identity suggest that it is a concept that is difficult to understand, as it is influenced by history and "political location", thereby assuming a fluid or malleable character, hence making it a victim of manipulation, abuse and misuse. In other words because it is influenced by history and political location, circumstances and is constructed for particular reasons it is prone to adaptation, change and transformation. At play is how and why *identity* is created or conceived. In South Africa, for example, the problem of *identity*

has been part of the social and political spectrum throughout the social, political and economic development within and among these diversities. This was a result of the antagonistic interaction between black and white, rich and poor, haves and have not's as well as the rural and the urban (Mashige, 2004: 3; Gleason, 1983: 910). In other words a particular *identity* has bipolarities that cannot be discussed in isolation of the other. This also means that it is about representation of the one in order to distinguish one from the other and exposes the self and/ or the other thus making *identity* to be a vast discourse because of the ever present changes. As a result, according to Bauman (2002: 18) and Gleason (1983: 911) this makes *identity* to be a fertile ground for debate, which continues to be a scholarly problem. Gleason (1983: 913) further asserts that "this is the most appealing term of our time", thus further indicating its ambiguity. The current researcher quotes Brubaker in Cooper (1989: 62) who contends that "identity is used by political entrepreneurs to persuade people to understand themselves (as will be seen later on Vhavenḁ), their interests (ironically this will mean the interests of the coloniser and apartheid administration) and their predicaments in a certain way, to persuade certain people that they are (for certain purposes) 'identical' with one another and justify collective action along certain lines." This further underpins the implication of *identity* in everyday identity politics, *alas* in its various circumstantial forms.

In this regard with time authors have used different concepts to conceive identity, especially during the 1990s towards the 2000s. Mashige (2004), for example, used poetry to discuss identity, spanning different situations, experiences, eras and socio-political objectives. In these instances Mashige (2004) wrote of "poetry of the self", "Black consciousness poetry", "the poetry of the revolution" (related to political protest and the liberation struggle), "worker poetry" and "feminist poetry" (very popular among gender activists and women in democratic South Africa) to show how it exposes the bipolarities of the "inside and outside", "self and other", "personal and political" as well as the "subjective and the objective". In other words *identity* can be understood to be about distinctiveness but still about commonalities, meaning that identities may be opposing sides that exist within each other and alongside each other, *alas* for various objectives and destinies. Given the diverse nature of South African politics, societal *identity* was previously about racial groups, language, culture, politics and religion, among other aspects. Hall (1996: 15) further indicates that *identity* which was

articulated by other authors cannot exist alone as it is influenced by culture and political situations. To enhance this argument Hall (1996: 15) further contends that this is why debates on *identity* open floodgates located around culture, be it racial, ethnic and national identity, thus making discourses on *identity* to be continuous and situational thereby giving the concept a temporary and malleable character.

The dawn of democracy in South Africa saw the euphoria of the concept “rainbow nation” being bandied around in order to encourage national reconciliation and national togetherness within these diversities of colour, race, language, ethnicity, religion, history, class and culture (Mashige, 2004: 2-3). This was in great contrast to the pre-1994 period when and where the apartheid government employed various concepts like *ethnicity* or *ethnic identity*, language, religion, colour, race, culture and tradition to enforce the group distinction policy of apartheid as well as to conceive *identity* and in the same vein conceive, conceptualise and establish the homeland system (Magubane, 1979: 256; Worden, 1994: 75; Malan, 1989: 43; Nemapate, 1998: 3, 32). The argument, therefore, is that *identity* is not static but changeable, transformable, ‘misrepresentable’, ‘misusable’ and ‘manipulable’ depending on the objectives envisaged, hence its essentialist (as deemed by history and experience), conditional, continuous and temporary character, as has been the case according to postulations above.

Therefore one understands *identity* to be based on the politics of change which encourage ‘change and transformation’, which are about sameness and differences as well as the self and otherness under various circumstances. In this instance, therefore, reference is made of the use of language, traditions and cultural values to conceive *identity*, and *ethnic identity* in particular (Mashige, 2004: 2; Hall in Du Gay, Evans and Redman, 1996: 17-20; Bhabha in Hall, 1996: 172; Bhabha in Hall, Du Gay and Redman, 1996: 53-57; Mackenzie, 1978: 22, 24 and 31; Chazan, Mortimer, Ravenhill and Rothchild, 1992: 77-78). The understanding drawn from here is that *identity* is not only conceived but also adoptable and adaptable, such that while it undergoes change it might lose its ‘originality’, can be erased or abandoned with time, experiences and situations; or may be sustained in order to preserve and distinguish

the self against the other. To corroborate this Thornton in Boonzaaier and Sharp (1988: 26), Giddens (1993: 38) as well as Mashige (2004: 12) add that *identity* operates under erasure making it to be 'situationally' flexible, whereas culture is looked at as a fixed and stable concept "steeped on traditions, values, practices and customs." Giddens (1993: 38) further asserts that every culture has its own unique patterns of behaviour which also differ from the culture outside it; another reference to bipolarity. On the other hand Thornton in Boonzaaier and Sharp (1988: 26) asserts that culture is controlled by the social and environmental aspects which make it changeable and in the same vein enable people to interact with each other. This contention further concretises that 'age-old patterns are redefined' as a result of 'new circumstances' and the ever changing surroundings; a further discourse regarding the nature of culture. This is also understandable in view of the fact that human beings are constantly experiencing and influencing change, given their dynamic nature. According to Thornton in Boonzaaier and Sharp (1988: 26):

Unlike the other physical resources, however, culture is never 'used up', but can only grow, change or even disappear in use. It is people who can create cultural resources and control access to them...Over the *very long term* we can talk about the evolution of culture.

Given the above it is evident from the arguments on culture and *identity*, or vice versa, that if culture changes or evolves, it then assists the process of conceiving the belonging to or the *identity* of the self in relation to the other and determines inclusion and exclusion (Hall in Williams and Chrisman, 1994: 394; Thornton in Boonzaaier and Sharp, 1988: 26-27). This again underlines the fact that *identity* is, one way or the other, assisted by culture in order to be adaptable, malleable and changeable under particular circumstances and for particular reasons, be they political or social. As such there can never be the self in the absence of the other, much as subjectivity exists alongside objectivity, which further corroborates the fact that *identity* has a dual character steeped in bipolarity as it is so much about sameness and difference as well as being within and outside the group.

In this regard Bauman in Hall and Du Gay (1996: 18-19) mentions that the process of *identity* used to be an “individual task”: thus one sided. To this end cultural *identity* must be thought about in the context of cultural relationships, which then reduces the individual task mentioned above. In other words it goes back to the issue of inclusion and exclusion, sameness and difference, self and other, which underpin *identity*. Ironically, this means that *identity* is not identity if it is understood in the context of isolation. One gets to understand this to mean that sameness exists as a result of comparison and differentiation; the same goes for inclusion and exclusion. The cultural relationships, therefore, mean that *identity* may exist as a result of experience of the other, given the dynamic nature of humans as influenced by history and interaction between the self and society in the quest for belonging or *identity*.

According to Hall in Hall and Du Gay (1996: 13, 15) identification is a process of constructing or producing *identity*. In the same vein Mashige (2004: 4) is in unison when averring that *identity* ‘implicates identification’ and that the process of identification does not end but continues; hence its ever changing nature, which exists under erasure because cultures change as culture assists in the process of conceiving *identity*. Hence the construction of *identity* is a continuous process because cultures constantly experience evolution. This makes identification a process that is assisted by a certain culture at a particular given period and evolves as a result of particular experiences, interactions, relationships and environments. This helps to conceive the self and/ or the other, the same or the different, the inclusion or the exclusion (Hall, 1996: 16-20). In addition, much as *identity* is changeable or malleable, as a result of political location and/ or relationships and the evolution of culture, then identification is influenced by reasons and what is essential or not, the essentialist and/ or the anti-essentialist thinking, depending on the prevailing circumstances, thereby making it an incomplete process (Hall, 1996: 2-6, 16-19; Mashige, 2004: 4). This, therefore, emphasizes the temporality of *identity*, be it cultural or not. To this end Vander Zanden (1979: 124) avers that:

Identities are socially bestowed. They must be socially sustained and fairly steadily so. One cannot be a human all by oneself, and apparently, one cannot hold on to any particular identity all by oneself.

This being the case, it also means that cultural relationships or cultural interactions, *vis-à-vis* cultural *identity*, influence the quest for self-identity through shared history, origin, experiences and environment and, in the same vein, shared culture, language, customs and traditional values (Grossberg in Hall and Du Gay, 1996: 87). It is in this context that Mashige (2004: 8) further opines that “within the context of the struggle of national emancipation and cultural ‘freedoms’ cultural and ethnic identities are aggregated in the quest for self-definition”. This means that cultural relationships and/or interactions change overtime, meaning that cultural *identity* remains incomplete as it is influenced by social factors, subjected to history, culture, power and the environment (Grossberg in Hall and Du Gay, 1996: 91; Radithlalo, 2002: 11). The conclusion drawn is that cultural *identity* is located by and locates the self with the assistance of the past and present. The self, therefore, is about self-identification which depends on the self-consciousness of the group in association with a particular region or territory, cultural affinity and political locality, steeped in myths and traditions (Myburgh, 1981: 35; Chazan, Mortimer, Ravenhill and Rothchild, 1992: 77-78; Mackenzie, 1978: 31-39).

The self gives identities their temporality and bipolar character based on the political locality thus affording *identity* a characteristic of incompleteness. However, Mashige (2004: 9) cautions that identities should not be because of “convenient issues of political and racial expediency” that can be forced upon individuals and/or groups; as has been the case in the South African apartheid context. In other words these identities must allow for a space for other antagonistic identities to co-exist within their distinctiveness and thus allow for growth and evolution. Hence it appears befitting that the self is mentioned along-side the other, inclusivity and exclusivity, rich and poor, old and modern, since there cannot be mention of one without the other, because such a situation allows for subjectivity rather than affording room for objectivity. It is furthermore from this premise that a discussion on the *ethnic, ethnic identity and ethnicity, ethnic group and ‘tribe’* follow below.

3.2.1 A word on the *ethnic*

According to *Compact Oxford English Dictionary* (2013: 341) *ethnic* relates to a group of people with common national or cultural tradition. The source further shows that *ethnic* refers to origin by birth rather than by the present nationality which belongs to non-western cultural tradition. Other sources explain that the *ethnic* was used independently by referring to the 'other' which was different from the self (Brass, 1991; Schalk, 2000; Myburgh, 1981; Giddens, 1993; Hobsbawm, 1993; Jenkins, 1997; Cornell and Hartmann, 1998; Chazan, Mortimer, Ravenhill and Rothchild, 1992; Dreidger, 1989; Radithlalo, 2002; Adams, 1995; SPP, vol. 5, 1983; Bekker, 1993; Buijs, 1998; Hammond-Tooke, 1997; Van Binsbergen, 1995 and 1997). These sources are in unison that in modern times the concept *ethnic* is being used to qualify other concepts, like it is the case when advancing explanations on *ethnic*, *ethnic identity and ethnicity*, *ethnic group and 'tribe'*. However, Cornell and Hartmann (1998: 16) say that "what the concepts such as *ethnicity*, *ethnic identity and ethnic group* mean is in fact slippery and difficult to define." In other words these authors are honestly owning to the fact that these concepts are shrouded in controversy much as the discussions above have shown that *identity* itself is situational. In this regard the sentiments of these authors are corroborated by other authors who further argue that the concepts *ethnicity*, *ethnic identity and ethnic group* are problematic to define as they are constructs (Schalk, 2000; Muthien and Khosa, 1985; Van Binsbergen, 1995 and 1997; Adams, 1995; Bekker, 1993).

At issue is the fact that these concepts are just creations that emerged and were manipulated by colonialism, apartheid and decolonized states for political expediency: in order to suit both the objectives of colonial administration and the apartheid policy in South Africa. This was attributed to the efforts on the part of the South African government "to manipulate ethnic categories to entrench white domination" through racial separation and ethnic separate development. This gives an impression that these concepts, just like it is in the case of *identity* are constructions. However, the case may be that the current researcher would like to address each of these constructions separately as an attempt to explain them, although there may be a thin line that separates the method employed to do so in order to distinguish them from

each other. It is for these reasons that the discussion that follows is on the concept of *ethnic* before proceeding to the others mentioned alongside it above.

Cornell and Hartmann (1998: 16) explain that the word *ethnic* is all about identification according to group that was used in the past especially, in Europe to refer to heathens (also referred to as pagans) or those who did not “share a common dominant religion”, in this case Christianity. In other words the concept *ethnic* referred to those who did not belong, “the others who were different from us” but on religious terms. However, as time evolved it tended to assume the characteristic of just referring to some or distinguishing them from others in relation to added categories such as common cultural practices, common heritage or nationality, customs and tradition, dress code, language and common history, among others (Cornell and Hartmann, 1998: 16). In other words the concept assumed a sociological connotation such that factors, markers or pointers were used to mark this differentiation; it came to be used as an instrument of contrasting from others and/ or discriminating groups (Ake, 1993: 1-2).

In line with the above, *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* (1987: 346) defines *ethnic* as something of a racial, national or tribal group whereas *Collins Dictionary: Essential English Dictionary* (1989: 263) sees the concept as something connected with or relating to different racial groups. Therefore, the concept *ethnic* is also referred to as pertaining to or characteristic of a people, especially a group sharing a common and distinctive culture, religion and language, among other markers (Brass, 1991: 69). In a similar manner as have been referred to in the paragraph above *ethnic* cannot be understood as a noun, generally, but can only be used alongside other words like in the case of *ethnic relations*, *ethnic group* and *ethnic identity*, to mention a few (Brass, 1991: 13; Cornell and Hartmann: 1997: 20; Adams, 1995: 473). Its use gives the concept *ethnic* an adjective character since it qualifies that which stands alongside it and thus relates to relations, group and *identity*. However, regardless of the way in which the concept *ethnic* has been explained by the different sources consulted, one is left with no doubt that both *ethnic identity* and *ethnicity* need a more involved explanation as it is apparent that there exists a thin line that separates them.

3.2.2 Ethnicity and ethnic identity

From the discussion on *identity* and 'identification' above it transpired that the former implicates the latter while the latter is more involved with the process of constructing or creating a specific *identity*. In the same vein it would appear that there exists a preference to explicitly distinguish the two concepts above instead of using them interchangeably as it was indicated above; an exercise which seems rather superficial. Although *ethnic identity* is defined as the recognition of the distinctiveness from others based on "common cultural, linguistic, religious, behavioural or biological traits, either real or presumed", *ethnicity* is regarded as an "important means through which people can identify themselves" (Adam, 1995: 461-463; Bekker, 1993: preface, 14, 69, 76, 86). Regardless of this apparent distinction of the two concepts it is clear from sources that authors would rather generally employ them interchangeably. It also strengthens the argument by Cornell and Hartmann (1998: 19) who refer to the slipperiness of these concepts, while the assertion by Bekker (1993: cover page) refers to the undeveloped nature of discussions on the two concepts. Furthermore, Bekker (1993: cover page) contends that it is this slipperiness which mostly leads to discourse. The interesting point to highlight is that *ethnic identity* forms part of human life and is related to the inherent nature of people. There is also an assertion that regardless of the concept being associated with the inherent, the historical or even the mythical, *ethnic identity* may be used, misused, abused, manipulated, misrepresented, made to be emotive and even mobilized for the purpose of power and privilege, further giving it a malleable character, at the altar of political expediency (Bekker, 1993: i, 5, 8, 111, 14, 21).

Furthermore, Bekker (1993: 18) asserts that *ethnicity* poses one of the greatest challenges to the social sciences because it appears to be understood whereas it is just widely recognized. The author further explains that discussions on these concepts have over the years tended to be both "undeveloped and contested". In addition, this assertion indicates that, just like in 'identity and identification', there are varying approaches such that *ethnicity* is easily related to the process of *ethnic identity* formation based on the concepts reflected above and 'identities' assigned to it. The result is that there emerges a tendency to assume that *ethnicity* is not different in meaning to *ethnic identity*. For example, some sources assert that "*ethnicity* or *ethnic*

identity” refers to membership in a particular cultural group and that it is defined by shared cultural practices, including but not limited to holidays, food, language and customs” (Brass, 1991: 19; Kirkaldy, 1994: 50-54; Cornell and Hartmann, 1997: 20-21; Nemapate, 1998: 9). One clearly notices this tendency to assume that *ethnic identity* bears the same meaning, if not a similar meaning, as *ethnicity*.

However, the inclusion of food and holidays apparently relates to the influence of religion where a particular group may refrain from consuming specific kinds of food because of prohibition on the precepts of religion or based on such historical or mythical beliefs. The bottom line is that there is a determinant to this process of identification. The inclusion of such elements as food is not really the common factor. The essence is that the sources cited earlier intend to make us privy to the tendency of some authors to use the two concepts (*ethnicity* and *ethnic identity*) interchangeably. Furthermore, some sources refer to *ethnicity* “in its narrowest sense as a feeling of continuity with a real or imagined past, a feeling that is maintained as an essential part of one’s self-definition and the need for a collective continuity as a belonging member of some group” (Eriksen, 1993: 1, 5 and 12; Schraeder, 2000: 38; Vander Zanden, 1979: 124; Smith, 1998: 7; Chazan, Mortimer, Ravenhill and Rothchild, 1992: 102). Additionally, it is maintained that *ethnicity* includes a sense of personal survival through a historical continuity of belonging that extends beyond the self (De Vos in Romanucci-Ross and De Vos, 1995: 25). This again underscores the thin line that separates the concepts *ethnicity* and *ethnic identity* such that the current researcher is inclined to adduce from this that the authors are discussing *ethnic identity* while attaching to it a similar meaning as *ethnicity*: hence the thin line separating the two concepts.

Dreidger (1989: 9) quotes Max Weber who explains that “race, culture, tribe, nationality and religion formed the central foci of the concept *ethnic identity*”; this is in contrast to the explanation that pivoted around food and clothing. Therefore, Weber singled out factors which are based on heredity and endogamous conjugal groups where these identities resulted from political identification within political communities in line with tradition, language and culture. In support of this assertion Young (1974: 31, 38, 41, 43 and 75) avers that *identity* has always been based on language, religion

and culture for the sake of communal cohesion (and differentiation), in addition to administrative purposes. Underpinning this assertion, therefore, is the juxtaposition between the administrative as well as the political objectives; as it was the case when the colonial and apartheid hierarchies identified the crucial nature and role of *vhuhosi* and institutions for political expediency of the ethnic homeland policy. This is further reference to an earlier discussion which emphasises the changeable, fluid, malleable and subjective nature of *ethnicity* and *ethnic identity* depending on the political purpose it is supposed to serve. In this regard Adam (1971: 463) says that:

Ethnic identity waxes and wanes not only in response to group members' own perceived needs, both instrumental and symbolic, but also in response to imposed identities by outsiders.

This passage makes reference to experiences of *vhuhosi* and institutions whose *ethnic identity* "waxes and wanes" as a result of the use, misuse, abuse and manipulation by colonial and apartheid administrations for the objectives of the self at the exclusion of the other. As a result *ethnic identity* lost its original context value, and so did *vhuhosi* and institutions. In support of this Jenkins (1997: 19) indicates that the search for community is merely expressed in *ethnic* identification thus meaning that the process is expediently used to determine and impose a sense of belonging. Inasmuch as history has no blank pages and is always in the making, so do experiences and circumstances influence *ethnic identity*, thereby giving it an ever changing character based on the needs and objectives of the self at the behest of the other. The result has been that *ethnic identity* became a tool for colonial and apartheid administrations to enact policies which adversely affected the relations between them and the colonised who deliberately regarded *vhuhosi* as belonging to non-states, for the sake of colonial control, paternalism and hegemonic power (Young, 1974: 19; Jenkins, 1997: 10; Smith, 1998: 2). Thus this was touted as the political 'gospel truth' by using language, culture and tradition as the centre underpinning *ethnic identity*.

In addition to these, Smith (1998: 2) and Jenkins (1997: 10) mention that there can be no *identity* without memory and a sense of collective purpose as it was equally imposed on Africans, and black South Africans in particular. Therefore *ethnic identity* is about a sense of belonging based on one's "thinking, perceptions, feelings and behaviour." In other words it is necessarily about personal *identity* as an individual with four major components used to categorise an individual with the group and/ or the group from another: ethnic awareness, ethnic self-identification, ethnic attitudes and ethnic behaviour (Smith, 1998: 2; Jenkins, 1997: 10). The fact that man is dynamic and multi-faceted implicates that an individual is closely related to a specific language, sex, age, gender, religion, social class and generation. However, all these are not 'cast in stone' as *ethnic identity* is relational and subjective. To further drive this point home Bekker (1993: 69) notes that *ethnic identity* is what one may term a "floating phenomenon", further proof of its malleability and 'amoebic nature' which the author also refers to as "fundamentally elastic", making it open to manipulation. This again emphasizes the fluidity of *ethnic identity*, its changeability as well as its temporal nature. According to Bekker (1993: 69, 86) in South Africa ethnic communities were treated as fixed amidst the social changes which were imposed on racial lines socio-economically and socio-politically, an assertion which is supported by Brass (1991: 25). In addition political *identity*, and thus *ethnic identity*, can be 'shifted' to suit political circumstances and "limitations imposed by state authorities" (Brass, 1991: 15; Uchendu in Romanucci-Ross and De Vos, 1995: 126).

Although *ethnic identity* is/ was treated as fixed, it was in reality not but could be shifted as a result of its political locality and the fact that it was manipulated for or can/ could be influenced by political circumstances. De Vos in Romanucci-Ross and De Vos (1995: 15) states that it is in this regard that *ethnic identity* is a continually evolving social process, sometimes occurring within a single generation. Therefore, *ethnic identities* of Africa have to be seen as instruments of manipulation from above and modes of accommodation and adjustment from below. This argument is further strengthened by other authors who emphasize that in Africa *ethnic identity* proved to be a strategic phenomenon due to its changeability, fluidity, temporality and its influence by political locality (Eriksen, 1993: 31, 31, 60, 68 and 76; Brass, 1991: 16; Van Binsbergen 1995: 1-2; Van Binsbergen, 1997: 5; Nemapate, 1998: 9 and 34).

It is apparent that the current researcher attempts to avoid interchangeably using *ethnicity* and *ethnic identity*, hence the emphasis was on *ethnic identity* like it happened with *identity* and identification, and in order to equally avoid the ensuing confusion. It flows from this elaboration that *ethnicity* may be regarded as a sense or feeling of *ethnic identity* based on the “subjective, symbolic and emblematic” use by a particular group of people and of a specific culture and tradition of which the sole purpose is differentiation of the social organization and identification” (Brass, 1991: 19; Eriksen, 1993: 12, 32, 79; Chazan, Mortimer, Ravenhill and Rothchild, 1992: 102; Van Binsbergen 1995: 2, 5, 7, 8; Van Binsbergen, 1997: 1-3). Brass (1991: 8) emphasizes that *ethnicity* is not a “given but a social and political process of construction”; meaning a process of ethnic construction or *ethnic identity* formation.

Jenkins (1997: 85 and 165) asserts on the one hand that *ethnicity* overlaps with a hierarchy of other sources of identification. On the other the author contends that *ethnicity*, which is about cultural differentiation is a fixed phenomenon. However, if one considers the fact that *identity*, and *ethnic identity* in particular, is fluid and is influenced by circumstances, it would be incorrect to conclude that it could be fixed given the fact that it overlaps. Furthermore, the fact that it has been subjected to manipulation to satisfy political objectives and that it is a construction is evidence of its floating and elastic nature. This negates the claim that it satisfies fixed characteristics. It is for this reason that Young (1974: 49, 65 and 181) emphasizes that *ethnicity* is a subjective phenomenon, it cannot be fixed, because it is often variable, overlapping, situational and it is “articulated by intellectuals” thereby weaving it into a theory of solidarity.

In other words intellectuals and/ or politicians usually weave it into a theory of solidarity by articulating a particular concept in relation to the objectives of a particular policy to satisfy particular policy circumstances, since solidarity is equally situational and situations are never fixed. Therefore, it is difficult to understand how *ethnicity* can be claimed to be a fixed concept given the arguments above, more so given the mention of fluidity and malleability of identification to which *ethnicity* is regarded as equivalent and much of a construction or a process of *ethnic identity* formation. Therefore the claim about its perennial nature would not hold although *ethnicity* has existed at all

times and that it presumably never changes. In this regard because constructivism further holds that *ethnicity* is a modern invention and social construction this negates the claim of its perennial nature (Van Binsbergen, 1995: 2-5 and 7-8; Van Binsbergen, 1997: 1-3). In support of this assertion Adam (1971: 460 and 463) avers that *ethnicity* manifests itself in different settings with different historical roles and that scholars assign it to prevailing political concerns of the time. Therefore, it is difficult to assume that it can be fixed, given the different arguments that have been advanced above.

3.2.3 A look at the *ethnic group* and ‘*tribe*’

Some authors define an ‘ethnic group’ as a human group that has a subjective belief in a common descent because of similarities of physical type or of customs or both, or because of shared history of colonisation and migration (Dreidger, 1989: 8; Chazan, Mortimer, Ravenhill and Rothchild, 1992: 106; Bennet and Peart, 1991: vii; Van Binsbergen, 1997: 2). The reference to a shared history of colonisation raises a very pertinent assertion that vividly shows that an ‘ethnic group’ is a creation of a foreign system of imperialism and colonial conquest to enslave Africans in the project of hegemonic and political paralysis, in this instance Vhavenda in particular. Therefore a shared history, language and culture served as an obvious starting point and the basis identified as strategic by foreign powers into identifying such *ethnic* markers. This assisted the colonialists in determining additional common traits that could serve as conditions that were favourable to them. In addition it made it possible for them to determine the socio-political destiny of people they wanted to dominate (Degenaar, 1993: 1; Brass, 1991: 19, 20). Ironically, these foreign powers never regarded themselves as ‘ethnic groups’ or ‘tribes’, but rather as nations and/ or minority groups.

Historically, any civilisation was preceded by people who shared a common history and heritage. However, the colonialists ascribed the concept ‘ethnic group’ specifically to the people they conquered and subjugated. In this study Africans, and Vhavenda in particular, are/ were identified on the basis of claimed “common heritage and history” (even if it is real or presumed) or “common ancestry” and other such traits or markers that give a group’s distinctiveness in membership outside others but inside themselves (Cornell and Hartmann, 1998: 19-20; Eriksen, 1993: 12; Jenkins, 1997: 9, 11;

Schaefer, 1992: 289, 294; Giddens, 1993: 252-253; Schraeder, 2000: 138; Smith, 1998: 7).

The ironic implication is that such distinctiveness which resultantly defined a people as an 'ethnic group' could not be applicable to people of European descent. Flowing from above 'ethnic group' has also been defined as a group of individuals with a shared sense of 'people-hood' based on the presumed shared socio-cultural experience and/or similar socio-political characteristics: national, linguistic, religious and racial (Driedger, 1989: 136; De Vos in Romanucci-Ross and De Vos, 1995: 18; Uchendu in Romanucci-Ross and De Vos, 1995: 126). The use of the word 'presume' is indicative of the fact that the Europeans saw the advantage of identifying what could definitely empower them to paternalistically manipulate what Africans valued, as a way of creating 'ethnic groups' for their own good, *alas* lowering the indigenous people to the position of victimhood.

Predictably, and to show that the concept 'ethnic group' was a colonial creation, it would sometimes be interchangeably referred to as 'tribes' as per colonial political arrangement, hence leading to separate distinctions and divisions. The concept 'tribe', however, already seems to have been extended too far from its established traditional sense to be applicable to those presumably politically and socially 'stateless' people based on presumed common descent, blood and culture (Skalnik in Boonzaaier and Sharp, 1988: 68, 70). According to *Compact Oxford English Dictionary* (2013: 1106) a 'tribe' is a social group in a traditional society consisting of linked families or communities with a common culture, dialect and ranks above *genus*²¹ but below family. It is worth noting that colonialism deliberately viewed Africans as politically and socially unorganised. Ironically colonialists embarked on studies depicting the socio-political organisation of such 'unorganised' and 'uncivilised' people from different disciplines: anthropology, history, politics and ethnology to advance their political ideologies. This was inherently tied to the politicization of the status of Africans for the sake of policy formulation which promoted "divide and rule" (Schalk, 2000: 3; Skalnik in Boonzaaier and Sharp, 1988: 70-71; Schaefer, 1992: 289, 294; Giddens, 1993: 252-

²¹ According to *Compact Oxford Dictionary* (2013: 421) *genus* is defined as a class of things which have common characteristics.

253). According to Neluvhalani (2018: 24) “divide and rule” fostered and concealed white domination because when white South Africans overcame their political divisions it was invariably at the expense of the rights black South Africans, by denying them access to land on the basis of segregation, whereas they themselves were not segregated, be it ethnically or on the basis of ‘tribe’.

It is in the light of this that Schwartz in Romanucci-Ross and De Vos (1995: 57) asserts that under the influence of new and broader forms of political leadership within the imposed and assimilated state, some of the ‘ethnic groups’ were made to become ‘tribal’ in the more prevalent political sense. The author further asserts that an ‘ethnic group’ is a self-perceived inclusion of those who hold in common a set of traditions not shared by others with whom they are in contact. Such traditions typically include “*folk*” (a people), religious beliefs and practices, language, a sense of historical continuity, common ancestry and place of origin. It is again worth noting that the concept ‘*folk*’ is foreign to Africans because they viewed themselves as existing in a communal space. Eurocentric imposition manipulatively claims that African membership in a traditional African ‘ethnic group’ is a matter of social definition, thereby ignoring the existence of the political aspect; hence Europeans saw an opportunity to abuse the interplay of members’ self-definitions and the categorization and stereotyping by others (Schraeder, 2000: 138; Nemapate, 1998: 10, 13; Van Binsbergen, 1997: 2).

In this instance then it is apparent that ‘*peopleness*’ is more original and valid when it is determined by the self rather than by the other, as it would be an imposition because the other will/ would intentionally supersede the will and wishes of the group such that the end-game would be conquest, subjugation, assimilation and political objective of control. In essence in such circumstances the objectives of the self and that of the other mostly find themselves on a collision course (Eriksen, 1993: 81, 82, 86, 87, 88, 90-98; Nemapate, 1998: 10, 13; Muthien in Khosa and Muthien, 1998: 69; Smith, 1998: 156; Van Binsbergen, 1997: 2; Schalk, 2000: 2) as can be ascribed to how African leaders responded in such circumstances: Makhado, Mphephu, Sekhukhune, to mention a few.

As an anthropological concept, which is a European discipline, the concept 'tribe' derives from the premise that there are aggregates of people who essentially share a common culture and that there are interconnected differences which distinguish one 'tribal' culture from all others. 'Tribe' implies the emergence of a political organisation on a small scale, usually a subdivision of a larger whole. 'Tribes' have been formed by families banding together in the past, engaged in common political action to defend themselves or to get some work done (Cornell and Hartman, 1998: 9). While noting the contradiction that emerges from the preceding two statements regarding a 'tribe', it does not dilute the fact that the importance of a memory of a people having lived through common political experiences becomes part of a social construct, or a memory of cohesion and solidarity which people identify with. In such political actions they develop a sense of moral duty to other members of their people based on common purpose and communal existence. However, it cannot be denied that a people, or a 'tribe' as a bigger group in size to a family or clan, represents an elementary stage of organization around symbols and memory which is more diverse than family blood relationships (Dreidger, 1989: 9; Smith, 1998: 156; Schalk, 2000: 2 of 11; Eriksen, 1993: 81, 82, 86, 87, 88), which obviously alludes to the heterogeneity of such a group because it is a conglomeration of diversity.

It can be adduced from this that 'tribe' was indeed a colonial creation to satisfy policy objectives. According to Hammond-Tooke (1993: 37, 38) the concept 'tribe' was extremely vague and also derogatory because it referred to other less advanced people whereas the West referred to themselves as 'nation'. This points to the artificiality of the concept to suit colonial and racist policies. This stemmed from 'cultural classification or affiliations' based on the work of anthropologists, ethnologists and linguists, such that it was particularly pernicious in South Africa as it was an imposition (Hammond-Tooke, 1993: 38; Malan, 1989: 37). Hammond-Tooke (1993: 38) further advances that it was as a result of this that it formed the basis of the system of Bantu Authorities that were introduced in the 1950s, a precursor of the 'homeland policy' (Hammond-Tooke, 1993: 38). Stories, a form of oral history usually told by the elders, which in the language disciplines are referred to as folklore, and where written language has not yet been developed, are/ were an important part of perpetuating the shared memory of their origins. Stories of the origins of cults that were central to the creation of 'tribes' such shared as places which symbolise these beginnings, and

leaders who were central to preserving these memories are all part of the collective memory of the people as a 'tribe'. Memories, epic tales and legends often become religious beliefs. Lastly, some studies show that religion is an important part of 'tribal' consciousness such that religion, memories and stories of origins of cults formed the basis of 'tribal' creations (Dreidger, 1989: 9-10).

To corroborate these statements Fick (July 13 to 19, 2018: 34) contends that under colonialism and apartheid, so many South Africans were seen as belonging to a particular culture, rather than as citizens of the country: referred to what were seen by colonial observers as less advanced. According to Fick, writer Bessie Head mentioned the significance of 'race' in the distribution of power and resources in South Africa and that the definition and history of 'race', and *ethnicity*, as figured in South African history, are inextricably linked to colonial conquest. This should be understood within the context that history has no blank pages (Nyanda, 2018: 5). Furthermore, Fick (July 13 to 19, 2018: 34) mentions that one Edward Said traced the processes by which imperialism, and by implication, colonialism and culture worked together to produce the knowledge systems by which indigenous people became classified, and how such classification became calcified over time. It were these differences that were identified by colonial settlers and their related missionaries that mattered and thus held sway. According to Fick (July 13 to 19, 2018: 34) in South Africa this can be traced in the development of dictionaries of indigenous languages during the colonial period.

To add credence to the above, Neluvhalani (2018: 2) asserts that the process of knowledge production was accompanied by the translation of European texts, or texts such as the Bible, which were so central to the Christian components of colonial conquest into standardised versions of indigenous languages for the sake of communication. The author further asserts that in the main was the usage of orthographies by the missionaries from various European Missionary Societies (EMS) who changed the original spoken language into different language groupings with evangelical cultural nuances; hence European languages became standardised as the national languages mirrored in the South African context. This required the establishment of written traditions in the local languages. The first ever important texts

central to the missionary projects were translated, followed by the development of written records of the indigenous oral traditions. Whereas some of the cultural production was informed by anti-colonial resistance, the colonial project and its apartheid extension also used that material to construct the 'identities' and 'polities' of 20th century South Africa such that this apartheid notion of *veelvolkigheid* (multiple nationhood) has lingered on in other forms (Halala, 2011: 21). Vail (1989: 11) avers that missionaries were responsible for the codification and categorisation of languages such as Xitsonga/ Xichangana and Tshivenda at the end of the nineteenth century and reified ethnic category into 'tribe'. Therefore, the role played by the various missionary societies with regard to the impact on black South Africans, Vhavana in particular, cannot be overemphasised in their complicity during *ethnic* construction.

According to Fick (July 13 to 19 2018: 34) in the apartheid era, this led to the development of 'own affairs' politics- radio and television stations serving what were superficially defined as linguistic groups actively constructed as cultural groups or '*ethnic identities*' and, thus 'ethnic nations'. The reconfiguration of the 19th century anti-colonial 'tribal' resistance- constructed in nationalist terms, ironically became the terms that anti-apartheid liberation movements had to abjure. Black 'nationalism' was meant to cut across the divisions that colonial conquest and apartheid policy had used to divide the subjugated indigenes in South Africa. Fick (July 13 to 19 2018: 34) further posits that one of South Africa's esteemed academics and writers, Professor Njabulo Ndebele, traced the reasons behind the rise of "black English" in South Africa and attempted to bridge the linguistic divide which colonialism and apartheid ossified as cultural difference. Therefore, the thrust in much of the anti-apartheid liberation politics was against the 'tribalism' that the colonial and apartheid regimes used to co-opt some indigenous political figures to sow dissent. It opposed the notion of *ethnic* categories which were based on whether people speak a specific language as their mother tongue, or whether their immediate forebears spoke that language, and which as a result encouraged the completely ugly and dehumanising colonial conquest and apartheid violations of basic human rights.

Halala (2011: 22, 29, 30) postulates that colonial rule involved force and the disruption of indigenous cultures and led to Africans compromising their cultures because history, like any other discipline, was deployed to perpetuate the interests of the white settlers. In the main this largely had a negative effect of distorting the realities of African historical experience. To the African, the value of people's languages, traditions and customs play a significant role in how people think about themselves; customs and habits became figured as cultures which came to be not only applied to, but also to define some Africans. From this premise *ethnicity* and *ethnic identity* became a primordial organising principle in politics and was created into ethno-nationalism through which the Afrikaners played a significant role in applying racism and segregation and the implementation of homeland policy. In the words of Halala (2011: 15) "the apartheid *ethnicisation* of African people culminated in the system of Bantustans."

It therefore flows from above that the emphasis by the authorities on parts of peoples' memories, religion and stories of cults were the result of a conscious determination on the part of colonial authorities to 're-establish' what they regarded as order, security and a sense of community belonging by means of defining and enforcing 'tradition' for political expediency (Smith, 1998: 156; Van Binsbergen, 1997: 2; Schalk, 2000: 2 of 11; Ranger in Hobsbawm, 1983: 249). The emphasis was on politics in order to use or abuse *ethnicity* and/ or *ethnic identity* of a particular people for reasons other than those intended by the group itself, meaning that the apartheid political conception of 'tribe' was imposed on people for the benefit of the other. Although custom helps to maintain a sense of identity, it also allowed for an adaptation so spontaneous and natural that it was often unperceived. Moreover, and in fact, there rarely existed in the closed corporate a consensual system which came to be accepted as characteristic of 'traditional' Africa. According to Shorter (1977: 8), almost all recent studies of the nineteenth-century pre-colonial Africa have emphasized that far from there being a single 'tribal' identity, most Africans moved in and out of multiple identities, defining themselves at one moment as subject to the 'chief', at another moment as a member of that cult, at another moment as part of this clan, and yet at another moment as an initiate in that professional guild. Ranger in Hobsbawm (1983: 248) argues that the boundaries of the 'tribal' polity and the hierarchies of authority within people did *not*

define the conceptual 'horizons of Africans'. It is for this reason that the current researcher agrees that to the foreigner African/ Vhavenḁa customs and traditions were neither perceived nor valued.

Furthermore Hobsbawm and Ranger (1983: 251) contend that colonial administrators expected officials to enforce long-established customs rather than the current opinion. In essence common stereotypes about African customary law thus came to be used by colonial officials in assessing the legality of current decisions and so came to be incorporated in 'customary' systems of tenure as blueprints. Once the 'traditions' relating to community *identity* and land were written down in court records and exposed to the criteria of the invented customary model, a new and unchanging body of tradition had been created to be in line with the colonial blueprint. According to these authors eventually there resulted a synthesis of the old and new which is presently called customary law. In essence, and in the language of colonial authorities, African people, black South Africans in particular (including Vhavenḁa), were to be 'returned' to their 'tribal' identities because, according to colonial policy, *ethnicity* was to be 'restored' as the basis of association and political organization (Hobsbawm and Ranger, 251: 249; Skalnik in Boonzaier and Sharp, 1988: 68).

Predictably this gave birth to rigidities, immobilisations and *ethnic* identifications which satisfied immediate imperialistic European interests because they were nevertheless seen by the white authorities as fully 'traditional' and were given legitimacy. Hobsbawm and Ranger (251: 249) maintain that the most far-reaching inventions of tradition in colonial Africa took place when the Europeans believed themselves to be respecting age-old African customs. However, it should be comprehended that what they actually called customary law, customary land rights, and customary political structure, and so on, were in fact adapted and adopted as invented by the colonial codification. Furthermore, the authors argue that defectively, 'tribes' were seen as cultural units who used a common language, a single social system, and an established common law whose political and social systems rested on kinship and 'tribal' membership was hereditary where different 'tribes' were related genealogically, a view echoed by Skalnik in Boonzaier and Sharp (1988: 68). This deliberately created a belief of homogeneous existence which even among Vhavenḁa did not exist before

Ṭhohoyandou himself had conquered and subjugated a variety of people from different historical origins (Van Warmelo, 1975; Welcome to Venda, 1979; Mabogo, 1990; Khangala, 1999; Nemudzivhaḁi, 1977, 1985 and 2017).

In South Africa, 'tribal' identity persists because the colonial and apartheid governments gave it an institutional and political support and because the tie to the 'tribal', communal or lineage land, often phrased in the idiom 'filial loyalty to ancestors'. To support this Skalnik in Boonzaaier and Sharp (1988: 68), for example, accentuates this statement by indicating that the concept 'tribe' in South Africa was "supplanted by the notion of 'ethnic group'" which became an important social and economic asset and contributed to *ethnic* loyalty which included the competition for jobs, the uneven distribution of government patronage, and the insecurity of urban employment. As a result this saw the emergence of an element of 'ethnic patriotism' - an important value which conflicts with a wider national loyalty and patriotism (Skalnik in Boonzaaier and Sharp, 1988: 68; Shorter, 1977: 8 of 14).

Flowing from above 'tribal' loyalty has a number of aspects: loyalty to the family or lineage, loyalty to the 'tribal' community, and loyalty to *mahosi* or the government. It does not follow that an individual who is no longer loyal to his/ her *khosi* has rejected the community to which he owes certain duties and from which he expects a certain security. It is for this reason that the *ethnic identity* of the urban African is situation oriented. The African in the rural area and in town are two different individuals because the person would be 'detrribalized' when he/ she leaves the 'tribal'/ rural area but would then be 'retribalized' when he/ she goes back to the rural area (Skalnik in Boonzaaier and Sharp, 1988: 68; Shorter, 1977: 8 of 14). This is further evidence of how socio-politically circumstantial the life and existence of the African people had been made due to colonialism. As if to corroborate the preceding statement Callinicos (1983: 21) asserts that "the rural man took time off from work in town for the traditional initiation into manhood", an indication that he was still loyal to his culture, community and countryside. Uchendu in Romanucci-Ross and De Vos, (1995: 126) posits that persisting loyalty to a 'tribe' operates for a man in two quite distinct situations and that

different “spheres of identity can be segregated in an interesting hypothesis which seems to receive wide ethnographic support in black Africa.”

As a result, to the colonial and apartheid authorities a distinction had to be made, on the one hand, between social, political and economic bonds with the ‘tribe’ (the structural dimension), and on the other, the preservation of ‘tribal’ customs, language and other cultural elements (the cultural dimension). It also became clear that the mere length of residence in town did not necessarily entail a loss of ‘tribal’ *identity* or the rejection of all customary behaviour that ‘urbanized’ individuals could also switch back and forth between urban and ‘tribal’ behaviour, according to the situations they found themselves in (Hammond-Tooke, 1997: 149; Callinicos, 1983: 21). Consequently, cases reveal that the ‘tribal’ label given to a community was one of political convenience (Rodgers, 1976: 91; Ake, 1993: 1, 2, 3, 4; Adam, 1995: 458, 460, 461, 462, 463, 464, 468).

3.3 Vhavenda: To be Homogenous or not to be Homogenous

Generally, among Africans and in the usual sense, political and cultural *identity* was based on affiliation to a particular traditional leader or ruler, herein referred to as *Thovhele/ khosikhulu/ khosi* in Tshivenda; *kgošikgolo/ kgoši* (Sotho) or *inkosi* (Zulu), for example. The ruler was regarded as a symbol of communal unity and a binding factor on which the survival of the particular group depended, be it politically or ritually (Union Government (U.G.) 61/1955, “Summary of the report of the Commission for the socio-economic development of the Bantu areas within the Union of South Africa”, 1955: 2; Shorter, 1977: 8; Myburgh, 1967: 79 80; Kirkaldy, 2004: 82; Fokwang, 2003: 35-53). All in all Africans have shown stark similarities and contrasts although the all-embracing traditional unit of the social organization is based on a common ancestry of a central group or nucleus of families, as well as familial relationships and a patrilineal system (Union Government (U.G.) 61/1955, 1955: 2; Sibasa/Makwarela Archives, “Acceptance of the remains of *Thovhele* (king) Makahane and *Vhakoma* (queen) Nyamutangwa of Thulamanama/ Vhupfulanama/ Thulamela for their ceremonial reburial, 31 May 1997, at Thulamela in the Kruger National Park”). Mindful of the significance and centrality of the position they occupied within communities, it

is no wonder that *mahosi* were easy targets of manipulation at the hands of colonial and apartheid administrators, since they held sway within their respective communities. The process of manipulation, misuse and abuse trumped the process of administration that was hell-bent on professing *ethnicity* and *ethnic identity*. This happened under the guise of historical and cultural uniqueness of the other which formed the basis of the social-political or 'tribal' organisation, and thus laid the basis of the Bantustan or homeland policy.

It is a historical fact that Vhavanḁa comprise a multiplicity of cultural groups²², as shown below. Some of the other groups that complete the composition of Vhavanḁa people and are claimed to share a common tradition and cultural heritage (Van Warmelo, Feb. 1975: 13; Lábbé, Ribot and Steyn, 2006: 24).²³ Masingo of Ṭhohoyanḁou and Ramabulana have strong ancestral links with the Karanga/ Vhakalanga/ Shona of Zimbabwe. Equally their sub-group of Vhalemba originate from the southern part of Zimbabwe around Mount Berengwa or Mbelengwa, south-east of Zimbabwe, which borders the north-eastern corner of the Limpopo Province of South Africa. History has it that during their arrival in Venḁa during the late 1600s (sixteen hundreds) and early 1700s (seventeen hundreds) they came into contact with other groups of Vhangona, historically accepted as aborigines of Venḁa, and much later the Xitshangana/ Xitsonga as well as the Sesotho- and Setswana speaking groups. This

²² For the sake of this study and subsequent chapters, henceforth the current researcher feels more comfortable in employing the concept 'cultural group' rather than 'tribe', where applicable. This is because of the negative connotation attached to the latter word.

²³ E.N. Lábbé, and M. Steyn are/ were both lecturers in the Department of Anatomy, Faculty of Health Sciences at the University of Pretoria. I. Ribot is/ was a member of the Department of Archaeology at the University of Cape Town at the time of releasing the cited article, which was revised in May and October 2005. NB. Netshisaulu avers that Vhavanḁa refers to the people who live in the Soutpansberg area called Venḁa and that Tshivendanḁ refers to the culture and language spoken by Vhavanḁa. In the same token Netshisaulu reminds us that however there are some people who refer to the language as Luvanḁa, an influence that he claims comes from living among Vhalemba (referred to as the Lemba in some sources) who generally call the spoken language Luvanḁa. A stark reminder is that of the late Professor M.E.R. Mathivha, a Mulemba and former head of the Department of Tshivenda at the University of the North, now the University of Limpopo, Turfloop Campus, Limpopo Province.

historical process diluted the originality of Vhangona because one way or another this influenced and/ or affected their original culture, language and traditions which had not been recorded before the 18th and the 19th centuries (Giesekke, 2004: 22; Mudau and Motenda, 1958: 15, 16, 17; N̄emudzivhadi, 1985: 5; Hanisch, April 1994: 68; Conerly, 1990: xi; *The Republic of Venda*, 1979: 35; Lábbé, Ribot and Steyn, 2006: 24; Maylam, 1986: 52; Du Plessis, 1955: 122; Ralushai and Gray, 1977: 1; Gottschling, 1900: 365; Van Warmelo in Hammond-Tooke, 1974: 78; Warwick, 1983: 8; Tauatswala, 2005: 18; Ralushai, 1979: 5; Summary of socio-economic development of Bantu areas, 1955: 1 and 2). It is for this reason that the discussion here focuses on the subject of Vhavenda homogeneity which has been claimed and/ or imposed on them by government officials during their journey to 'construct' Vhavenda cultural groups, *ethnicity* or *ethnic identity*. In order to do this the current researcher deems it foolhardy not to forgo a discussion on the diverse Vhavenda cultural groups; this with the ultimate objective of critiquing the complexity of Vhavenda being homogenous or not homogenous.

As a point of departure a discussion on Vhangona is of outmost importance leading to the question of homogeneity in this regard. It is worth noting that according to Schapera (1966: 64) and Wessmann (1900: 10) T̄hohoyandou and his Masingo or Vhasenzi(nzi) descendants "...are really the Venda people." Schapera (1966: 64) further says that Vhasenzi/ Masingo "...found others in occupation already, for instance the big cultural group of Lwamondo, and the Ngoṅa (Vhangona, singular Mungona), who survive in little more than name." In this regard Van Warmelo (1935: 117) even proffers that the Mphephu/ Sinthumule/ Kutama section of Vhavenda may claim being Vhavenda proper by virtue of their agnatic connection to the legendary T̄hohoyandou, which the current researcher regards as a historical misnomer. The Vhasenzi/ Masingo's agnatic connection with the legendary T̄hohoyandou cannot necessarily grant them the claim of aboriginality in Venda. In actual fact this claim explains the influence that government anthropologists, ethnographers, archaeologists and historians were under political influence to the point of ignoring historical facts relating to both Vhasenzi/ Masingo and Vhangona. It also does not need a rocket scientist to make one understand that aboriginality means exactly that: original occupation of land during earliest times, from the beginning, before anyone else (*Compact Oxford English Dictionary*, 2013: 2-3). In everyday language Vhangona were inhabitants in the Venda area of the Soutpansberg/ Spelonken District before

Vhasenzi/ Masingo. In essence it would appear that the two authors apparently ignore(d) the fact that based on folklore and related oral history, later written history which owes so much to the former as reified by them at the behest of the objectives of their colonial masters, the cardinal reason Vhangona “survive in little more than name” is because of their conquest, subjugation and ultimate assimilation at the hands of Vhasenzi/ Masingo of Thohoyandou, not because Vhasenzi/ Masingo are Vhavela proper as opposed to Vhangona, the aborigines of Venda.

Notably, Schapera (1966: 64), whether wittingly or unwittingly, then concedes that on their arrival in Venda Vhasenzi/ Masingo found others already in occupation of the area; if this does not translate into the aboriginality of Vhangona and that in turn these were before Vhasenzi/ Masingo arrived in Venda, this begs the question what aboriginality is and further beggars belief of the claim that Vhasenzi/ Masingo are indeed the real Vhavela. In the same vein, sources consulted by the current researcher are incontrovertibly in agreement that Vhangona settled in Venda probably around the 1300s, whereas Vhasenzi/ Masingo only arrived between the late 1600s and early 1700s (Welcome to Venda, 1979: 4; Nemudzivhadi, 1985: 13; Van Warmelo, 1935: 117; Möller-Malan, 1957: 220; Stayt, 1968: 11; Dzivhani and Mudau, 1940: 66; Mudau and Motenda, 1958: 11; Nemudzivhadi, 1977: 5, 8; Khangala, 1999: 1; Giesecke, 2004: 8; Neluvhalani, 2018: i, iii, 3, 4, 5, 53, 150). It is on the basis of the concert nature of data from these sources that the current researcher challenges the validity of Schapera and Van Warmelo’s claims that Vhasenzi/ Masingo are the real Vhavela, and thus reduce these nuances to superficiality.

In essence, the sources cited above are unanimously in concert that not only are Vhangona the first people to settle along these shores but the original Vhavela who gave the area its name, Venda (Welcome to Venda, Bureau for Information and Broadcasting, Venda Government, Republic of Venda, 1979: 4; Giesecke, 2004: 8). Nemudzivhadi (1977: 8) regards Möller-Malan’s quote (1957: 220) below as indicative of the latter being “one of the white writers who understood the difference between Vhangona and Vhasenzi.” In the light of this Möller-Malan posits that “a small group of Vhavela had already established themselves and no one knew the place and time of their origin”; further evidence of Vhangona’s aboriginality and their being the real Vhavela, thus quashing the claim of Vhasenzi/ Masingo’s aboriginality. Nemudzivhadi

(1977: 5) further postulates that when two of Vhavenda renowned historians Motenda and Mudau (1958: 11) wrote during the first half of the twentieth century they contended that Vhangona were the true Vhavenda and that Vhasenzi, wrongly referred to as Vhavenda elsewhere in some sources, were originally speaking Kalanga/ Karanga; a fact that Nemudzivhadi (1977: 8) maintains that it is accepted by all Vhavenda who possess some historical knowledge. In addition to this, Mudau (1940: 8) explicitly maintains that the "...name Vhavenda...belongs to the Ngoni", which paints a more unanimous reality about the difference between Vhasenzi/ Masingo and Vhangona.

In summation it is therefore mind-boggling why at the backdrop of such unanimous historical evidence should Schapera, Van Warmelo and Wessman controversially claim differently on the question of Vhangona *vis-à-vis* Vhavenda. In this regard the current researcher wishes to once more refer to one Silusapho Nyanda who succinctly writes that "history has no blank pages" (*Sowetan*, Wednesday 5 September 2018), literally meaning that history happens such that it offers an ageless and invaluable fact that can never be erased. Furthermore, Stayt (1968: 11), as quoted in both Nemudzivhadi (1977: 5) and Neluvhalani (2018: 150), reportedly says that during research escapades in Venda he (Stayt) came across a Mungona by the name of Netshitumbe who "could recite the names of his paternal ancestors who had occupied a place called Tshitumbe spanning a period of sixteen generations." This fact cannot have been informed by nothing else except folklore and oral history, if the generational data is to be taken into account, to further concretise the central position occupied by Vhangona in the early socio-political history, if one would rather call it, of Vhavenda.

Furthermore, Stayt (1968: 11), Nemudzivhadi (1977: 5) and Neluvhalani (2018: 2, 4, 5, 28, 53, 150) are in concert that as the first inhabitants of Venda, Vhangona had named all the places, mountains, rivers, hills, grass, trees, stones, birds, and so on. Nemudzivhadi (1977: 5) further posits that even today the inhabitants of Venda revere the ruins and sacred places of Vhangona (see also Neluvhalani, 2018: 4, 53 and 150). According to Nemudzivhadi (1977: 5, 6, 7) the diverse groups of various origins that later joined Vhangona in Venda are:

(a) **Vhanyai** from the easterly direction of Southern Africa, where they eventually

- settled in eastern Venda at Mount Madzivhaṅombe (around present Giyani);
- (b) **Vhambedzi**, also from the easterly direction who settled at Tshulu (present day Ha-Makuya), Tshilavulu (now part of Thengwe Traditional Authority) and east of Makonde Mountains (north-east of present town of Ṭhohoyandou);
- (c) **Vhaṭavhatsindi** of Mount Folovhoḍwe followed a southerly course and they include (d) Vhakwevho of Lwandali, Neluvhola of Mount Luvhola area, east of Elim Hospital, and Vhafamaḍi of Ha-Mashau as subdivisions. The rulers of Vhaṭavhatsindi were Manenzhe, Nethengwe and Matidze;
- (d) **Vhalea** (Vhaleya) of Tshivhula (corrupted to Sebola in Sesotho-sa-Leboa/ Sepedi) hailed from the northern-western direction;
- (e) **Vhaṭwanamba** of Musina area (previously corrupted to Messina during colonialism and apartheid). They are presently settled at Musina and Soutpans areas, respectively;
- (f) **Vhasenzi/ Masingo** (originally from Central Africa) apparently broke from Vharozwi/ Karanga/ Shona of Zimbabwe and during their southerly journey came across Vhalemba. As shown above Vhasenzi/ Masingo originally spoke Kalanga/ Karanga.
- (g) **Vhalemba** who originated from Mount Berengwa/ Mberengwa in the south-eastern part of Zimbabwe, were conquered, subjugated by and assimilated into Vhasenzi/ Masingo human element and with whom they crossed the Vhembe River around the late 1600s and/ or early 1700s and settled in Venda at the foot of the Soutpandberg Mountain Ranges. Masingo eventually established their headquarters at the first Dzaṭa around the Nzhelele Valley (Venda: A land of independence, and land of culture, n.d; Welcome to Venda, Bureau for Information and Broadcasting, Venda Government, Republic of Venda, 1979);
- (h) Lastly, the Mphaphuli's of **Ndebele** origin (Nzunza and/ or Manala) who also later joined Masingo of Ramabulana (Nemudzivhaḍi, 1977 and 2017; Mudau, 1990; Khangala, 1999; Heroldt and Dombo, 1992; Netsianda, 2001).

Neluvhalani (2018: 5-6) is equally in agreement that Vhangona are the real Vhavenda and that they occupied Venda long before Masingo/ Vhasenzi but further mentions more groups who were late arrivals in the area: Vhadau, Vhandalamo, Nḍou²⁴,

²⁴ Nḍou means elephant whereas on the other hand Singo originates from *musingo* which means

Vhalaudzi, Vhakheli, Makwindā, Vhaluvhu, Khomola, Mukhobōdo, Vhaṅarini and Vhalembetu. This denudes the essence of variety in origin and the diversity of the cultural groups that comprise Vhavendā people. In summation this further disproves Schapera, Van Warmelo and Wessmann's claims of Masingo as the real Vhavendā. In the same vein for Van Warmelo (1935: 117) to contend that "Mphephu (sic Mphefu) and his relatives may claim to be the Vēnda proper, by virtue of the descent of Mphephu from the famous chief of legendary history, Ṭhohoyandou... for him a great many other Vēnda dynasties also trace their origin" is misleading in the extreme and affirms the general assertion that the author was working at the mandate of the government to create and strengthen the assumption of *ethnic* homogeneity among Vhavendā and a common link to Vhasenzi/ Masingo of Ṭhohoyandou.

In a telephonic conversation Netshisaulu (05 August 2018) equally disagrees with the claim of Vhavendā homogeneity by citing their diverse and erstwhile cultural affinities. He names Vhalaudzi, Vhaṭwanampa (apparently a corrupted version of Vhaṭwanamba as a result of contact with Basotho and/ or Batswana), Vhanyai, Masingo, Vhalemba, as examples (See also Benso, 1979: 17). Apart from Vhalemba who arrived in Vēnda riding on the back of Vhasenzi/ Masingo after they had conquered and subjected them, Netshisaulu also emphasises that there cannot be a claim of homogeneity due to differences in origin and history. It is in this regard that Nemudzivhaḍi (2017: xiv-xv) further reminds all and sundry of the white government's influence on and the ignorance of ethnographers, anthropologists, archaeologists and historians such as Van Warmelo, Schapera, Stayt, Lestrade and Wessmann to mention a few, regarding Vhavendā as a people. The ignorance of this group of researchers in the treatment of the study on the history of Vhavendā and related issues cannot be over-emphasised. For instance Van Warmelo (1975: 11) surprisingly admits that he:

the trunk of an elephant. Netshisaulu advances that although Masingo/ Vhasenzi of the progenitors of Ṭhohoyandou were of Karanga/ Vhakalanga/ Shona affinities, after conquering and subjugating Vhangoṅa and uniting all and sundry under their *vuhosi* system, they adopted singo as their totem with the fundamental view to be relevant and/ or belong. NB. The various cultural groups mentioned above had either had different or shared similar totems: pigs, tail of goat, etc.

Did not realise that there was a core of understanding to be sought, since they were not concerned with the people themselves, or the possibilities of a more comprehensive and sophisticated history. They (sic) did not consider the Blacks to be educable beyond a certain level, so they delved into their customs and traditional history only to emphasise the lack of sophistication in the Venḁa...They (sic) felt the Venḁa were as uncivilised as other natives. They (sic) did not care about the people. Therefore, their short-sightedness... influenced their attitudes in the presentation of their material, in some instances in a most unscientific manner. There is evidence throughout his writings of abhorrence of some Venḁa customs...His attitude was one of assumed paternalism and condescension towards the Venḁa.

One can elucidate that Van Warmelo and company were not interested in the welfare of Vhavendḁa in order to understand their human dynamism such that this depicts them as agents who undertook to research on and about Vhavendḁa in contrast to through them and with them, at the behest of the whims of the powers that be. This observable weakness in the intellectual productions by earlier ethnographers, anthropologists and historians is what the Afrocentric paradigm seeks to address and correct. Flowing from above this further makes fluid the claim by Mathivha (1985: 8) and Van Warmelo (1935: 117) of the existence of Vhavendḁa homogeneity that they bandied about. This also weakens Van Warmelo's (1975: 1) advance that Vhavendḁa enjoy a "form of culture complex of exceptional homogeneity", whatever that means, and Mathivha's (1985: 17) contention that Vhavendḁa are fairly homogenous such that it is not possible to divide them. This is against the background that Vhavendḁa were actually a composition of various families and clans with different origins and histories. The current researcher also wishes to acknowledge that Mathivha (1985) was not a historian but an educationist. The current researcher further wishes to state that the Eurocentric influence of the period during which his/ her study was conducted, when Vhavendḁa *ethnicity* was being bandied about for political expediency cannot be ignored: 'ethnic nationalism' of Vhavendḁa homeland. Mathivha (1985: 17) further advances that in spite of cultural differences among various *sibs*²⁵ Vhavendḁa 'nation'...

²⁵ The word *sib* means related by birth or descent.

considers itself a single unit. While Mathivha acknowledges the existence of cultural differences which are 'markings' that define a people, the author buckles under the influence of Eurocentrism and 'intentional ignorance' of Vhavenda diversity and heterogeneity under the guise of homeland 'nationalism'.

The current researcher is of the view that Van Warmelo and Mathivha, either wittingly or unwittingly, or even cautiously, acknowledged the complexity and/ or diversity of cultural groups that comprise Vhavenda people. The result is that these authors contradicted themselves thereby weakening their claim of homogeneity, or they were influenced by the period and circumstances that prevailed during the time of their writings to support the 'falsehood' of this homogeneity. The bottom line is that given the diversity of cultural groups mentioned above, especially their points of origin as alluded to earlier, it is unimaginable to conclusively claim that Vhavenda shared a common origin, save for the efforts by Dambanyika/ Dimbanyika or Thohoyandou to unite them as a political unit and Makhado's attempts to revive Thohoyandou's kingdom after it disintegrated following the latter's disappearance (Nemudzivhaḍi, 2017). In Van Warmelo's (Feb. 1975: 1) work the author further turns a blind eye to the reality of history, cultural diversity and origin, by saying that:

The Venda form a compact ethnic entity sharing a small country, much common history and culture and language of notable homogeneity. They need no one to tell them that they were, and are all Venda.

The current researcher adduces that, contrary to claims by Mathivha (1985) and Van Warmelo (1935 and 1975) that Vhavenda comprise a homogenous group, they actually comprise a conglomeration of various cultural groups that have additional influence of Karanga/ Kalanga, Tonga, Tsonga/ Shangaan and Northern-Sotho (also called Bapedi) (Van Warmelo, 1935: 117). In fact Van Warmelo (1935: 117) alludes to the fact that Vhavenda form a "culture complex of exceptional homogeneity". Regardless of claims of homogeneity, by its nature Vhavenda cultural composition was complex for foreigners or government ethnologists to fully understand, as averred to above by Nemudzivhaḍi (2017: xiv-xv) that random claims of homogeneity cannot be conclusively arrived at about them. In essence, Thohoyandou or Dambanyika and Vele-ḵa-Mbeu before him, had welded various cultural groups under a united kingdom

of Vhavenda people which must not willy-nilly imply historical commonality and homogeneity; more so because the name Vhavenda originally and explicitly referred to aboriginal Vhangona. Thus Vhavenda are a multi-cultural people and a product of the conquest by Dambanyika/ Vele-la-Mbeu/ Thohoyandou. One cannot ignore the fact that by its nature Vhavenda's strength was enriched by cultural heterogeneity. It is the well-considered view of the current researcher that inasmuch as Vhavenda are a multi-cultural group, commonalities in terms of cultural practices and/ or value systems cannot be ruled out among its constituent social groups. The foregoing assertion should be understood within the context that any culture is not static and over time the cultural practices of the small social groups have a potential of being assimilated and/ or acculturated through contact with the dominant socio-cultural group(s).

Furthermore, Vhavenda's contacts of later years with other language groups such as Batswana also enriched the evolution of their multi-cultural character, further confirming, as mentioned earlier in the chapter that *ethnic identity* is circumstantial, socio-politically constructed and influenced by external forces. Therefore an attempt to ignore the importance of historical origin, experiences and the resultant acculturation happens at one's own peril. Flowing from above Vhavenda are a product of inter- and/ or intra-cultural and *ethnic* fusion with other groups, making it an amalgamation of diverse groups with different histories, cultures and languages: hence the emergence of a multi-cultural entity, without ignoring to appreciate the existence of heterogeneity within their human fabric (Giesekke, 2004: preface, 1 and 22; Mudau and Motenda, 1958: 15, 16, and 17; Hanisch, April 1994: 68; Netshisaulu (Face to face interview, University of Venda, 18 September 2009 and Interview on Capricon FM, "Who are Vhavenda", 17 September 2009); Ralushai (1978: 2) and Ralushai, 1978: 2).

In the words of Ralushai (1978: 2), the amalgamation of Vhavenda with other cultural and language groups served as a melting pot which enriched Vhavenda's own history, culture and language due to multiple influences that gave rise to a unique group. Ralushai further avers that Vhavenda benefitted due to the resultant complexities and diversity which is seen in their clan usage, music, different initiation rites, traditional practices and games, traditional dances, religion and languages, among others

(Interview with Prof. Emeritus V.N.M.N. Ralushai²⁶, 23rd August 2010, University of Venda; See also BEN, N4, “Fostering of nationhood and identity through symbols,”; 1/237/1 vol. 25, “Venda people had a ‘culture and tradition...,” 1981: 1; Sibasa/Makwarela Archives, “The Vhavanḁa united into a homogenous nation, proud of their culture and language”, in “Shumela Venda”, 1979; Ralushai, 1978: 2; Tauyatswala, 2005: 44). However, the current researcher would like to hasten to dissect the phrase “Shumela Venda” for what it is. The historical reality of the matter is that “Shumela Venda: Strive to work for Venda” was a motto previously bandied about during the homeland era as part of a propaganda strategy to instil a sense of progress and development as a people as well as a falsehood that influenced patriotic ‘ethnic nationalism’. Accompanying this was the ‘national anthem’ to rally Vhavanḁa around ‘ethnic nationalism and patriotism’: “Pfano na Vhuthihi: Harmony and Unity” (Republic of Venda: Constitution Act (Act of 1979: 35 and 36)). In other words the two ‘national symbols’ were aimed at inculcating false homogeneity so that Vhavanḁa would believe that they were indeed a nation within the homeland arrangement, *alas* for the fulfilment of the separate development policy of apartheid: an ethnic patriotism and nationalism that was a product of ethnic development envisaged by the apartheid government ethnologists and anthropologists.

In the same vein, Tshithukhe asserts that there is no way in which social interactions cannot affect culture and language; hence this impacted on a people’s *ethnic* identity (Interviewed on 24 August 2010, University of Venda). Be that as it may, the current researcher hastens to caution that this cannot in any way diminish the multi-cultural nature or heterogeneity of Vhavanḁa people but rather lays emphasis on the impact of external influence after which the central features of language and culture do not really vanish but are rather enriched. It is for this other reason that the current researcher disagrees with Mathivha’s (1985: 17) and Van Warmelo’s (1935: 117) claim of Vhavanḁa homogeneity although equally agreeing with the perpetual existence of

²⁶ According to T.S. Ntsandeni, for reasons better known to Prof. Ralushai, he interchangeably used three or four initials in a number of his sources, namely Victor Nkhumeleni Matodzi (V.N.M), Nkhumeleni Victor Matodzi (N.V.M.) or Victor Nkhumeleni Matodzi Nemakhavhani (V.N.M.N). Therefore where applicable and this so appears, the current researcher will cite the initials as they appear in the source consulted.

regional and dialectical divisions within Tshivenda language. This is regardless of resultant external influences of which dialectical divisions are evidence of Vhavenda heterogeneity. Mabogo (1990: 12) explicitly puts it that Vhavenda might appear homogenous whereas it is common knowledge that they comprise a number of sub-groups with different origins and customs. Therefore it is significant again at this point in time that the current researcher would rather prefer to stay away from addressing these groups as 'tribes' but rather as cultural groups. It is important to note that Ake (1993: 2) also alludes to the importance of language and culture as central markings which underscore the social existence of identification. In the same breath it is worth noting that Van Warmelo (1975: 4) whether wittingly or unwittingly, acknowledges the element of heterogeneity within Vhavenda thereby stating that:

Vhavenda population is also put into the same broad categories (Vhailafuri, Vhambedzi, Vhaṭavhatsindi, Vharonga, Vhania, etc.) to indicate cultural and speech categories.

These categories are actually based on dialectical divisions that were a result of the undeniable existence of various Vhavenda sub-groups which were influenced, one way or another, by the coming into contact with different cultural groups throughout their history at any given point in time. According to Magubane (1998: 8) and Kirkaldy (1998: 82) indigenous African culture, in common with other cultures, has always been dynamic, adapting to external circumstances and events. These circumstances and events have been mentioned as to have been, among others, conquest, trade and other such economic and political contacts, social events such as the coming of the missionaries (and the impact of Christianity), exchange of indigenous religious practices, emergence and growth of the migrant labour system, the discovery of minerals and industrialization. Regardless of the changes they may have undergone down in history, what distinguishes Vhavenda as a people rests in their cultural multiplicity as a united group welded by the policy of aggrandisement of legendary Thohoyandou before they split and disintegrated into the eastern, western and south-eastern sections of independent *mahosi* after his mysterious death or disappearance, whatever the case might have been ("Welcome to Venda", Venda Government, Republic of Venda, 1979; Nemudzivhadi, 1977 and 2017; Mabogo, 1990; Khangala, 1999).

In the same vein Van Warmelo and some authors further emphasize that Tshivenda language has a central role in distinguishing Vhavenda from other groups in that it is very peculiar, being a fusion of Northern-Sotho/ Sepedi and Karanga/ Shona of Zimbabwe; thus a distinct culture (Van Warmelo in Schapera, 1966: 65; Van Warmelo in Hammond-Tooke 1974: 78-9; Lábbé, Ribot and Steyn, 2006: 19-20; Hanisch and Huffman, 1994: 79). The assertion is further corroborated by the fact that being a fusion of different languages, each has its own place in one language, Tshivenda, thereby making it to be regarded as the most difficult to learn (Giesekke, 2004: 11; Malan, 1989: 38; Loubser, 1988: 2). The mere fact that Tshivenda is a fusion of different languages is further evidence of Vhavenda's cosmopolitan and multicultural nature: hence various dialectical divisions mentioned earlier. Regardless of this Van Warmelo in Schapera (1966: 63) and in Hammond-Tooke (1974: 78) argues that this did not stop the decay of Tshivenda (both as a language and a culture) by the 'enterprising' Tsonga/ Shangaan, thereby turning a blind eye to the duality of acculturation (See also BEN, N 4, "The fostering of nationhood and identity through symbols"; 1/237/1, vol. 25, "Venda people had a "culture and tradition..."; 1981; Tauyatswala, 2005: 44; Sibasa/Makwarela Archives, "The Vhavenda united into a homogenous nation, proud of their culture and language", 1981; Magubane, 1998: 82; Stoffberg, 1988: 44), among other sources.

3.4 Vhavenda of United Kingdom of *Thovhele* Ṭhohoyandou: The Era of Disintegration, from Ramabulana to Mphephu

Although it is generally held that the legendary Ṭhohoyandou united Vhavenda under one ruler, it was actually his grandfather *Thovhele* Ḍambanyika/ Ḍimbanyika, who during the late 1600s started the journey for that eventually conquered the aboriginal Vhangona, and brought them under Vhasenzi/ Masingo rule. This process was later consolidated in the early 1700s during the rule of Ṭhohoyandou's father, *Thovhele* Vele-ḵa-mbeu/ Dyambeu (Warmelo, February 1975: 1-2; Welcome to Venda, 1979: 5; Nemudzivhaḵi, 1977: 7-8, 1985: 20, and 2017: 1-2; Van Warmelo, 1940: 33-35).

However, the current researcher's view is that the preceding paragraph is not in any way aimed at diminishing the significant role played by Ṭhohoyandou in the making of the early history of Vhavenda. For his part, during the years of his rule Ṭhohoyandou

is credited with having further consolidated Masingo's dominance by appointing his sons, brothers, half-brothers and cousins as sub-rulers, in what may be regarded as a diplomatic-defensive strategy: making this period to be looked at as T̄hohoyandou's *annus mirabilis*.²⁷ According to Nemudzivhaḍi (2017: 3) T̄hohoyandou designated *mahosi* under him by posting his heir-apparent Ramabulana to Sunguzwi (Songozwi), north of present town of Louis Trichardt. His other sons, Ratombo and Mandiwana administered at Tshikombani (presently east of Siloam Hospital and Dzanani headquarters) and Vari (presently between Elim Hospital and Louis Trichardt), both in the present Makhado Local Municipality, respectively. His brothers/ half-brothers Raluswielo (progenitor of Tshivhase and Rambuda dynasties), Nelunguḍa (an ancestor of the Mphaphuli dynasty) and Bele (progenitor of Ravele dynasty) were posted at Depeni (called Dopeni in some sources, maybe due to colonial corruption), Tshitomboni and Vuvha, respectively. His cousin Magoro was appointed a *khosi* of Mbwenda, which is presently abandoned due to forced removals, the original Ha-Magoro which is presently a settlement under the proximity of Ha-Masakona village, south-east of Elim Hospital (Nemudzivhaḍi, 1985: 10; Archives of the War Office, *Native Tribes of the Transvaal*, 05-10-1905: 2; Dzivhani and Mudau, 1940: 25; Marole, 1940: 13; Khangala, 1999: 3). Incidentally, as a result of the colonial and apartheid political changes, former *Khosi* Magoro is presently a headman under *Khosi* Masakona of Ha-Masakona village within the Vhembe District Municipality (VDM).

It is worth correcting the claim that Nelunguḍa was one of T̄hohoyandou's brothers/ half-brothers. During a telephonic interview with Tshamano²⁸ (11 October 2018) the source reminded the current researcher that the Mphaphuli's actually originated from the KwaMhlanga group of Isindebele-speakers who descend from the Nzuzu/ Manala before they split due to succession dispute after the death of their founding father (See also Vail, 1989). Tshamano further alluded that during the era of Ḍambanyika, the Mphaphuli's arrived at Dzata as powerful *dziḥanga* (traditional healers and diviners;

²⁷ According to *Compact Oxford English Dictionary* '*annus mirabilis*' is a concept relating to a remarkable or a very good year or period for someone or something (2013: 34), notably a ruler in this regard, T̄hohoyandou.

²⁸ Humbulani Samson Tshamano is a lecturer in the Department of History, University of Venda, T̄hohoyandou, Limpopo Province.

witch-doctors according to Eurocentric lexicon) and because of their magical powers gained the former's trust, confidence and favours. As a result years later T̄hohoyandou gave them land to rule and a daughter in marriage to cement the diplomatic *vis-à-vis* in-law relationship. This made the Mphaphulis to grow in popularity. This narrative by Tshamano corroborates what the current researcher discovered during an interview with Ralushai (23 August 2010) regarding the history of the Mphaphulis and their subsequent arrival in Venda. However, the current researcher would like to caution that this is not in any way meant to dispute the fact that in the course of time T̄hohoyandou elevated Nelunguda to the status of *khosi* as part of his policy of aggrandisement. To cap it in March of 2012 the current researcher, in the company of Tshamano, had a personal experience of meeting the ruler of Amandebele of Kwamhlanga *Inkosi* (King) Makhosoke II at his palace during a visit by the University of Venda's Department of Development Studies (History Unit). On this occasion his majesty confirmed the Nzuza/ Manala agnatic link with the Mphaphulis. He added that they had left the area, Kwamhlanga, for Venda many centuries ago due to succession disputes; further evidence that Nelunguda was not T̄hohoyandou's brother or even half-brother.

Be that as it may the later years saw T̄hohoyandou conquering far-flung areas, thus establishing a great empire which saw his influence extended as far as south of the Olifants River and across of the Vhembe River in the north. As a result T̄hohoyandou's era was christened the golden era of Vhavenda history, making him the most famous Vhavenda ruler. It is worth highlighting that as a result of the vastness of the newly conquered area he brought Masingo dynasty to its greatest glory; thus showing his diplomatic prowess and political capability (G.O.V. 1087, P.S. 50/8/1907: 2; Location Commission No. 138/06, 2; Report of Native Location Commission: The Makhado (Magato) Ramapulana Tribes, 23-03-1907: 3; Nemudzivhadi, 1977: 10 and 2017: 1-3; Van Warmelo, 1940: 36-38; Hanisch, 1994: 76). Given the pre-colonial character of the period in question this speaks volumes about the sophistication of the system of governance adopted by the Vhavenda leader.

In order to further elucidate on this diplomatic strategy, Nemudzivhadi (2017: 8) cautions that this territorial administrative arrangement could have been construed by foreigners to translate into the division of T̄hohoyandou's kingdom into independent

states under individual *mahosi*; which in essence was not the case. Save for Nelunguḁa Mphaphuli, these other *mahosi* mentioned above were agnatic relatives as they were linked by the same progenitor. Mphaphuli himself had become family by virtue of marriage. Therefore, for a shrewd²⁹ ruler like Ṭhohoyanḁou the initiative to sub-divide the kingdom was mainly aimed at building a bastion of defence to thwart any external threats, and not in any way to declare independence to these *mahosi* (Nemudzivhaḁi, 2017: 8). Unfortunately, as history has it the demise of Ṭhohoyanḁou signalled the beginning of the disintegration of his kingdom from Ramabulana (1836-1863) to Aḁilali Mphephu (1895-1899). During Ramabulana's era the disintegration was engendered by his blind-sighted rapport with the white authorities in exchange for them supporting him in his quest for succession to the throne against his brother Ramavhoya, whereas Mphephu's strength and resistance against white control became his folly and downfall (Nemudzivhadi, 1977: 11; Khangala, 1999: 17).

Although before Aḁilali Mphephu, Ramabulana's successor son Makhado attempted to reunite the kingdom, the defeat of Alilali Mphephu and the subsequent subjugation of Vhavenda at the end of the "Mphephu-Boer War" put the final nail in the coffin. After years of resistance from the descendants of Ṭhohoyanḁou against conquest and subjugation by the colonial authorities the last independent Vhavenda ruler found himself powerless, betrayed and abandoned by his brothers and half-brothers alike (Report of the Native Location Commission. History of the Makhado (Magato) Ramabulana Tribes, 23-03-1907; Baramapulana or Bavenda tribe under magato: Claims of other tribes to land, Location Commission, 1906-1907; Nemudzivhadi, 1977 and 1985; Mabogo, 1990; Khangala, 1999). Ironically it is worth noting that this also goes to give the corollary of the fact that centuries later, Ṭhohoyanḁou's division of the kingdom under *mahosi* served as his undoing because it laid the basis for colonial and

²⁹ *Compact Oxford English Dictionary* (2013: 958) defines the adjective 'shrewd' as "having or showing sharp powers of judgement or being astute". Therefore the current researcher chose this adjective as befitting the policy of Ṭhohoyanḁou of aggrandisement in relation to him adopting the system of appointing sub-rulers, especially given the period during which he applied it, much as it was generally practiced outside Africa, especially in Europe. Equally, in *Reader's Digest: Family Word Finder* (1977: 717) another definition of 'shrewd' refers to, among others, smart, clever, sharp-witted, far-sighted, wise, intelligent, prudent and careful; hence the choice of the adjective in this discussion to refer to Ṭhohoyanḁou.

apartheid *ethnic* and 'tribal' divisions along the policies of "divide and rule" as well as separate development (G.O.V. 1087, P.S. 50/8/07. Location Commission No. 138/06, 1907: 2; Report of Native Location Commission, History, The Makhado (Magato) Ramapulana Tribes, 23-03-1907; Ralushai, 1978; Nemudzivhadi, 1977 and 2017).

Hammond-Tooke (1974: 79-80) contends that previously the whole of Venda consisted of mutually independent kingdoms, polarised around a few powerful dynasties. If by 1700 T̄hohoyandou, and his predecessors before that, had succeeded in uniting Venda under one kingdom, it is unimaginable that a kingdom could have had kingdoms within it. The current researcher understands a kingdom to be just that, a kingdom, under which there could be a number of territories or districts which bear allegiance to the central figure, the king or *Thovhele*. In what appears to be a contradiction, Hammond-Tooke (1974: 79-80) further contends that "Venda history turns out to be family or clan history." In this regard the current researcher is of the view that although the system of kingdom formation might have been a foreign concept to Vhangoṅa, who were Vhavenda of yore³⁰, the introduction thereof by Masingo, T̄hohoyandou in particular, speaks volumes about him.

It is therefore logical that Masingo jealously guarded and treasured their political achievement since the opposite would have weakened its invincibility, thus making it a playground for aggressors, especially whites; hence T̄hohoyandou's policy of defensive diplomacy and aggrandisement. This premise dispels the claim that before the late 1600s and early 1700s there were other kingdoms in Venda as this system was only ushered in after the conquest of Vhangoṅa by Masingo. Be that as it may, it was only after T̄hohoyandou's demise that the gradual breakup and erosion of the kingdom due to tensions between his sons Ramavhoya and Ramabulana occurred. This eventuality was engendered by internal disputes for succession wherein Ramabulana subsequently prevailed and ascended the throne. This development also saw the emergence of three powerful houses of Ramabulana, Tshivhase (which further split to create Rammbuḍa) and Mphaphuli; all related to T̄hohoyandou, as shown earlier, and his predecessors, further supporting the notion by Hammond-

³⁰ According to *Compact Oxford English Dictionary* (2013: 1206) 'yore' means of former times or long ago.

Tooke of family or clan history (See also Kirkaldy, 2004: 13; Giesekke, 2004: 8-9; Khangala, 1999: 2-3; Delius, Maggs, and Schoeman, 2014: 45).

However, it should also be noted that at this point Vhavenda were not as yet subjugated, regardless of the breakup until after the Mphedu-Boer War of 1898-1899. Of essence is that after the breakup the *Thovhele* and *mahosimahulu* status were reduced to *mahosi*, a status which became like a mantra within the official policy of colonial and apartheid governments of the South African Republic (SAR or the Transvaal Republic), the Union of South Africa and the Republic of South Africa, respectively (Van Warmelo, February 1975: 37-46; Nemudzivhadi, 2017: 69). After the disintegration of Masingo kingdom there was no clear distinction in hierarchical status among *Thovhele*, *mahosimahulu* and *mahosi* as it was the case before. Needless to say the lower echelon of *magota* was injected with importance for the sake of colonial and apartheid rural administrative objectives. This confusion resulted in the white authorities deliberately and confusedly referring to *mahosi* as 'kapteins or hoofkapteins' because they chose not to be conversant with Vhavenda hierarchical structure; *alas* to suit their administrative policy of 'tribalisation', ethnicisation and the subsequent "divide and rule".

It is worth noting that by this time Makhado, and later Ajjilali Mphedu, had neither subjected themselves to nor had been subjected by the white authorities. Truth be told, from the date of the white settlers' abandonment of Schoemansdal, Makhado had been recognised as the 'paramount chief' of the Northern and larger portion of the District of the Zoutpansberg, a title which he never accepted as he regarded himself as a king. Hence he vigorously re-embarked on a policy of aggrandisement to restore the Vhavenda kingdom to its former glory thereby earning himself the title of "Lion of the North" (Baramapulana or Bavenda Tribe under Magato. Location Commission: Claims of other tribes to land, 1906-7; Nemudzivhadi, 2017: 10). According to Nemudzivhadi (2017: 5). Just as it was customary for white authorities to attach titles willy-nilly, Makhado was addressed differently by officials and private individuals because in some documents he was addressed as "kaptein" (meaning captain), "hoofdkaptein" (senior captain) or "opperhoofd" (upper-leader or senior leader) all of which had no place in Vhavenda hierarchical structure and shows ignorance by the colonial authorities of Venda culture, customs, traditions and political structure. The

section below discusses efforts by colonial authorities to recognise, regionalise and create various *mahosi* as part of their policy of 'tribalisation' towards *ethnic* politics as an exercise which morphed the once respected *mahosi* into obsequious officials.

3.4.1 The emergence and regionalisation of various *mahosi* after the demise of Ṭhohoyandou: Towards the creation of tribes

According to Nemudzivhaḁi (2017: 69) by 1898 in Venda there were 33 (thirty-three) *mahosi*, especially after the house of Ramabulana had split into the three major houses of Ramabulana, Tshivhase and Mphaphuli. In the same vein Hammond-Tooke (1974: 80) cautions that it is important to understand that initially the names of rulers were not used to distinguish the people under particular *mahosi* (see also Kirkaldy, 2004: 13-14). This is despite of the fact that leading to the period of Ramabulana's rule Venda was inhabited by a number of cultural groups under numerous *mahosi* who had emerged after the ensuing split of Ṭhohoyandou's kingdom. This is reminiscent of the testimony by Delius, Maggs and Schoeman (2014: 45) about polities that were built around specific 'chieftainships' organised on the basis of kinship. The foregoing observation is further proof that previous polities were not really about 'tribes' but were organised around the family, clan or dynastic history. These authors further add that such dynamic political forms suffered splits oftentimes related to succession, as it was the case with Ṭhohoyandou's kingdom. This is equally supported by Hanisch³¹ (1994: 75-76) who avers the same regarding the period after the death or disappearance of the legendary leader, Ṭhohoyandou. Following this more independent *mahosi* emerged with further disintegration, the majority of which were engendered by the colonial authorities between the demise of Ramabulana and the conquest of Aḁilali Mphephu after 1899 (Wessmann, 1900; Schapera, 1966; 64-65; Stayt, 1968: 10-11; N̄emudzivhaḁi, 1977: 10-11 and 2017: 68; Khangala, 1999: 4-5; Kirkaldy, 2004: 13-14).

Contrary to the evidence above about the actual reasons for the emergence of the three renowned houses, N̄eluvhalani (2017: 28) would like the reader to believe that

³¹ Edwin Oscar Max Hanisch is former Head of Department of Anthropology at the University of Venda, Ṭhohoyandou, Limpopo Province.

in “1953 during the period of President³² Hendrick Frederick Verwoerd” Mphephu (sic Mpefu) replaced aboriginal *khosikhulu* Nenzhelele of Nzhelele, Tshivhase (sic Schewasse) replaced one Ntshiswinzhe and that Mphaphuli replaced Khurukhuru Nembilwi, all who were Vhangona by origin. He further claims that these three Masingo rulers were thus recognised as *mahosi* by the whites, respectively. Neluvhalani (2017: 28) further contends that resultantly this disenfranchised Vhangona at the stroke of a pen. The current researcher argues that in the first place nowhere in annals of history is there evidence of Verwoerd having been a president but prime minister of South Africa. Secondly, after the arrival of Masingo along the shores of Venda Vhangona were defeated, conquered and subjected under Masingo of Dambanyika/ Vele-la-Mbeu/ Thohoyandou dynasty, this being almost between two and three centuries before the arrival of whites in Venda, who only set foot around 1836 (Nemudzivhadi, 2017: 13). This was certainly long after the period of conquest between the late 1600s and early 1700s; hence Vhangona were defeated and subjugated by Masingo and not due to colonialism and/ or apartheid. Ramabulana, the son of Thohoyandou, who the white settlers assisted in a succession dispute was the first the whites acknowledged as a *khosi*. He ruled between 1836 and 1864 where after he was succeeded by his son Makhado, the father of Alilali Mphephu of the infamous Mphephu-Boer War of 1898-1899. It was only during the aftermath of this war that the house of Ramabulana/ Mphephu was forced to capitulate (SA LDE 202 1082/17. Secretary for lands- Secretary to the Locations Commission, 1906.01.12; Nemudzivhadi, 1977: 62, 169; Benso, 1979: 22; Nemudzivhadi, 2017: 289).

The first Masingo *khosi* to be installed by the white authorities was Alilali Mphephu's successor son George Mbulaheni Ramabulana Mphephu in 1924, Patrick Mphephu's father, who ruled from 1924 to 1949. Alilali Mphephu was the last Vhavenda ruler to offer resistance until after the Mphephu-Boer War when his territory was carved out into locations for Africans and white farms for his recalcitrant behaviour (Transvaal Government Administration (TA GOV) 1089 PS 50/8/1907. Location Commission 38/06. Report of Native Commission on the Location for the chief Mpefu (sic). Pretoria 1907.04.08; Van Warmelo, 1940: 42). It is evident from this that from Ramabulana to

³² Neluvhalani refers to Verwoerd's period as that of presidency. A historical fact is that the 'all-powerful' title of president in white South Africa only started during the rule of P.W. Botha.

Patrick Mphephu who succeeded in 1950, there spanned many years before 1953 and that the Ramabulana dynasty had long established itself in Venda. Therefore the demise of Vhangona was not because of colonial disenfranchisement but at the hands of Masingo as part of aggrandisement and Vhavenda political development. This is not to deny that the apartheid policy might have consolidated the Ramabulana seniority among Vhavenda, which seniority was achieved through Thohoyandou and his predecessors. Patrick Mphephu, grandson of Alilali Mphephu, was recognised by the apartheid authorities as a *khosi* of all Vhavenda in 1953 as part of the inception and development of the homeland policy of separate development. Therefore Neluvhalani's contention of colonial disenfranchisement cannot be true.

The significant point to raise is that the split of the Ramabulana house, and the Tshivhase house after it, was a boon for the political expediency of the policy of white authorities as the events afforded them a weak oppositional aggression against conquest and land occupation; thus making administrative purposes and tax collection easy. Additionally the antagonisms that they engineered played brother against brother as they did Ramavhoya against Ramabulana, Makhado against Davhana/Nesengani, and later Alilali Mphephu against Sinthumule and/ or Kutama, Sinthumule against Kutama, and Ratshimphi of the house of Tshivhase against his half-brother Ratshialingwa, and very well emboldened the policy objectives of the white authorities (Nemudzivhadi, 1977 and 2017; Mabogo, 1990). Another classical comparison is that reminiscent of Barolong-ba-Ga-Modiboa³³ of Machaviestat (Matlwang), an area between the Vaal, Harts and Molopo Rivers (in the present Gauteng and North-West Provinces), who during the seventeenth century were ruled by a powerful 'paramount chief' Tau. In the same fashion, after the death of Tau the Barolong split into four 'chieftainships' among his sons: the Tshidi Barolong, the Seleka Barolong, the Rapulana Barolong and Ratlou Barolong. Just like in the case of Vhavenda these

³³ In *New Contree*, vol. 40, November 1996, G. Oosthuizen refers to Barolong-ba-Ga-Modiboa.

It is possible that the author might have spelt the name wrongly and that the correct name might be Barolog-ba-Ga-Modiba and not Barolog-ba-Ga-Modiboa. The current researcher saw it appropriate to cite the source as it appears in the journal for convenience. Oosthuizen, is a former lecturer in the Department of History, Potchefstroom University for Christian Higher Education, presently known as Potchefstroom Campus of the North-West University (NWU).

resembled Barolong sub-groups under the leadership of adversary sons Tshidi, Seleka, Rapulana and Ratlou of 'paramount chief' Tau, respectively (Oosthuizen, 1996: 133). This trend can also be observed in other parts of Africa where the colonial/apartheid authorities had interests in the composition and practice of *vhuhosi* for the purpose of serving their selfish and narrow interests at the expense of the subjects of this African political institution.

Needless to say, the developments highlighted above gave the white authorities an excuse to claim that each *mahosi* of Venda had always been independent of each other. As such this regionalised Vhavanḁa into Western Vhavanḁa of Ramabulana/ Makhado/ Mphephu west of Louis Trichardt and include(d) Sinthumule (of Ha-Sinthumule), Kutama (of Ha-Kutama) and the smaller group of Musekwa (of Ha-Musekwa), Nthabalala (of Ha-Nthabalala), all sub-groups that were originally one family or clan of Mphephu/ Ramabulana. *Mahosi* Mphephu, Sinthumule and Kutama were sons of Makhado much as Ramabulana, Ramavhoya, Davhana and Nthabalala were progenies of Ṭhohoyanḁou. As such this regionalisation was a significantly expedient strategy as this served to divide and further weaken the power, resilience and resistance of the Ramabulana/ Mphephu dynasty. The split and/ or creation of these entities cemented the eventuality of Aḁilali Mphephu's land dispossession and the subsequent occupation of his ancestral birth-right, the land (TAB, KLT, vol. no. 2/1/6, Native Locations: Mphephu's Location, Soutpansberg District, 12th September 1902: 1; NTS 7787 191/335. F1294. Chief Mpefu's (sic) complaint; memorandum of proceeding at an indaba held in 18.10.1905: 3; Baramapulana or Bavenda tribe of Magato (sic), Location Commission, 1906-7; Bavenda: Makhado (Magato or Ramapulana Tribes, Native Affairs Department, 13 September 1926: 2; VG, Venda Vhuhosi Affairs, 2(2), 1989/90: 728-738; Union of South Africa, Office of the Chief Native Commissioner, File no. 13/10/1, 1949; Native Commissioner. Chief George Senthumula³⁴, 11th February 1907 3; Senthimula's location, Zoutpansberg District, Native Location Commission, 21 August 1906: 1).

³⁴ Senthumula is a corrupted version of the name Sinthumule, Aḁilali Mphephu's brother.

Elsewhere in some sources it is spelt as Sentumula or Senthimula.

The eastern or central Vhavenda sub-groups were categorised into the house of Tshivhase, a son of T̄hohoyandou from one of his junior houses, thus half-brother of Ramabulana. After the split of T̄hohoyandou's house, Tshivhase first established himself at Dopeni and Mailula, before extending his area to Phiphidi and Mukumbani (the present headquarters), respectively. The other houses are that of Mphaphuli (also related to Ramabulana through marriage), Rammbuḁa a half-brother of Tshivhase who split from the Tshivhase dynasty, *mahosi* Nelwamondo of Lwamondo, Nethengwe of Thengwe, Makuya of Ha-Makuya, Khakhu of Ha-Khakhu, Madzivhandila of Tshakhuma, Mutele of Ha-Mutele, Tshikundamalema of Tshikundamalema, Mugivhi of Ha-Mutsha and Netsianda of Tsianda, all of lower status who after interference by the whites became mutually 'independent chiefdoms' that were polarized around a few powerful ones mentioned above (Van Warmelo, 1935: 117; Schapera, 1966: 65; NTS 337, 7355, 1938-1950, 2/1/2/2 Chieftainship of the Venda Tribe, 1955: 5).

Comparably, just like Sinthumule and Kutama of Mphephu/ Ramabulana, Nethengwe, Khakhu, Mugivhi and Netsianda are products of splits and/ or creations and/ or promotions of *vuhosi*, but were christened the south-eastern group. Mugivhi and Netsianda are half-brothers and progenies of Dingaan the son of Gwamasenga of Vhalaudzi, but were supported in assuming independence to dilute their dispute over the succession of Mukhesi, their father and son of Dingaan. Gwamasenga's other sons are Masia (Masie) (*khosi* of Ha-Masia), Nengodzi (headman), Makumbane (headman of Tshisaulu under Tshivhase), Netshivhulana (*khosi* Netshimbupfe), Maphaha (headman under Mphephu), and Tshipetane (*khosi* Netsianda) who settled at Maḁhoḁhwe, Tshimbupfe, Tshisahulu, Tshivhulana, Phahwe and Tsianda, respectively (Schapera, 1966: 65; Schwellnus, 1970: 90-94; Kirkaldy, 2004: 13-14; Nemudzivhadi, 2017: 48-50). In the end the people or the subjects belonging to these regions are related to each other by belonging to the same royal lineage as a result of the cultural history of the family or clan, just as Ha-Tshivhase and Ha-Rammbuḁa, *inter alia* (Van Warmelo in Hammond-Tooke, 1940: 80; Ralushai, 1978: 2, 3; Ralushai, n.d: 4; The Office of the Native Location Commission, Native Affairs Department, Pretoria, Mpefu-Sinthumula-Maemu-Ndhabane (Davhana; *Republic of Venda*, 1957: 35; Conerly, 1990: 20; BTS 1/234/3/4, The Office of the Native Location Commission, Native Affairs Department 1982: 4; Schapera, 1966: 65). As succinctly put by Nemudzivhadi (1977: 11) the decentralisation or disintegration of monarchy through regionalisation has

serious repercussions on the history of a people as it could not co-operate in times of peace or equally present a united front in times of outside aggression, reminiscent of Thohoyandou's kingdom.

The last group is described as the southern Vhavenda who were formerly linked to and are/ were in close contact with people further south of Venda of Vatsonga/ Machangana and Basotho origin. This group comprised *mahosi* Davhana/ Rasengane/ Nesengane (Ramabulana), Nenngwekhulu (originally from Dzata and a lower *khosi* under the Ramabulanas), Netshimbupfe, Masia, Mashau of Ha-Mashau, Nthabalala (Ramabulana), Masakona (a lower *khosi* of Ramabulana), Mulima (Molema, a Mosotho by origin) Mashamba and Magoro (of Ramabulana lineage by virtue of being a cousin) (Schapera, 1966: 65). According to Schapera (1966: 65) the majority of this group are so mixed that one would occasionally be in doubt if the name Venda may still be applied to them. The last group is that of Vhalemba who have no *khosi* of their own but live scattered amongst and are subjected to various *mahosi* of Vhavenda (Native Commissioner. Chief George Senthumula, Louis Trichardt District, 13th October 1949: 3; Statutes of the Union of South Africa, 1927, Native Administration, Act no. 38 of 1927; Sibasa/Makwarela Archives, File 177/362 (1), no. 21, Modification of the area of the Venda tribe and the Mphefu Tribal Authority under Chief Patrick Ramaano Mbulaheni Mphefu, Louis Trichardt District; Definition of the areas of certain tribes and establishment of Bantu Tribal Authorities, Louis Trichardt District, 1957; Maylam, 1986: 53).

3.4.2 From regionalisation to the 'tribalisation' of *vuhosi* of Vhavenda

Following the erosion and 'harmonisation' of the hierarchical position of *mahosi*, which went hand in hand with the demotion, elevation, appointment and dismissal of recalcitrant individuals, the next step was to recognise the majority of the collaborative ones as leaders of 'tribes'. Regardless of these individuals being consanguineous³⁵, various artificial *mahosi* became designated as leaders of communities that bore their names, as indicated above. It is worth reiterating that regardless of the essence of family and clan histories, as mentioned by Hammond-Tooke (1974) and Nemudzivhaqi

³⁵ The term consanguineous refers to being of the same blood or being descendants of the same ancestor.

(2017), the white authorities sought to reify the system of *vhuhosi* to be in line with the research results of their ethnologists and anthropologists. In order to do this former families were deliberately divided into 'independent tribes' regardless of them belonging to the same progenitor(s). In most cases the white authorities rode on the back of succession disputes and pretended to resolve the impasses by further designating 'tribal' areas; thus a paradox of contagion. This also enabled the white authorities to expunge the resilience and resistance of *mahosi* against land occupation, by establishing 'tribal', regional and territorial authorities (Nemudzivhadi, 1979: 4). In the words of Nemudzivhadi (1979: 4):

Establishment of tribal authorities, which designation was misleading... were in fact chiefs' councils which were given a certain measure of local autonomy. The designation creates an impression that the 25 chiefs' councils are tribes. Most of these chiefs, however, originated from the same ancestors, Mphephu and Tshivhase.

This explicitly reminds the reader of the discussion above, especially with reference to artificial 'tribalisation' of Masingo dynasty where Ramabulana, and his brothers, half-brothers and brother-in-law, and later Aļilali Mphephu, were designated as distinct entities of Ramabulana, Tshivhase, to mention a few, something that was gradually regarded as innocuous by those individual 'polities' who found themselves victims of these impositions. To further depict this arrangement as innocuous but nevertheless attractive and beneficial to those newly created *mahosi*, the newly established Land Commission demarcated a number of locations for individuals like Davhana, Sinthumule and Kutama in all the regions mentioned above (Report of the Native Location Commission. History of the Makhado (Magato) Ramabulana Tribes, 23-03-1907: 3; Baramapulana or Bavenda tribe under Magato, 1906-7: 2; Senthimula's location, Zoutpansberg District, Native Location Commission, 21 August 1906; Transvaal Government Administration (TA GOV) 1089 PS 50/8/1907. Location Commission 38/06. Report of Native Commission on the Location for the Chief Mpefu (sic) Pretoria 1907.04.08: 2).

In a similar fashion, progenies of Gwamasenga were also later recognised independently as 'tribes': Masia, Makumbane, Muila, Netshimbupfe, Nelwamondo,

Mugivhi and Netsianda, to mention a few names (Van Warmelo, 1975; 37-26; Nemudzivhaḁi, 1979: 4; Nemudzivhaḁi, 2017). It is worth noting that other such creations benefitted people who were neither Masingo nor Vhangona originally, like Mulima. In essence these became the building blocks of the envisaged ethnicisation policy of Vhavanḁa as a people, which was a product of the subsequent 'tribal' and regional authorities, regardless of the claim of Vhavanḁa homogeneity alluded to earlier by some authors; hence a contradiction. These developments also assisted in the rapacious demarcation of Vhavanḁa land, especially the one formerly under Makhado and later Aḁilali Mphephu, for occupation by half-brothers Sinthumule and Kutama: newly created *mahosi* of designated 'tribes'. In the same breadth more land was scrambled out among whites for commercial farms and occupation, with the result that land became reduced for both occupation and agricultural practice by Vhavanḁa (Location Commission, no. 142/06, "Report upon locations for the chiefs Senthimula (Sinthumule), Mahimo (Maemu) and Kutama, containing the recommendations of Mr. E.H. Hogge, Commissioner of the Native Location Commission", The Office of the Native Location Commission, Native Affairs Department, Pretoria, 11th February 1907; Senthimula's location, Zoutpansberg District, Native Location Commission, 21 August 1906; Transvaal Government Administration (TA GOV) 1089 PS 50/8/1907. Location Commission 38/06. Report of Native Commission on the Location for the Chief Mpefu (sic) Pretoria 1907.04.08; Van Vuuren, 1991: 35).

Of essence is that as all this was happening, it resonated with the paternalism and practices of non-consultation as well as imposition which were typical of the white authorities. As alien as these practices were to Africans, they were later embodied by various *mahosi* who were corrupted directly or through association with the white authorities. As succinctly put by Van Vuuren (1991: 35) this was not happening on "their own terms, but within the apartheid constitutional framework and homeland (Bantustan) system." It is for this reason that it is essential to be reminiscent of the fact that the "history of chiefs is essentially dynastic history, manipulated to serve present ends" (Van Vuuren, 1991: 35). In the same line of argument as Van Vuuren Khangala (1999: 27) notes that the above developments were in conflict with the customs and traditions of Vhavanḁa aristocracy, as white authorities continued with much audacity with their policy while undermining *vhuhosi* value systems.

3.4.3 The ethicisation of Vhavenda under various *mahosi*

Ake (1993: 1) advances that *ethnicity* is popularly conceived as something constructed, invented or created. This statement resonates with what the current researcher has said in the above discussion on the ‘tribalisation’ of a dynasty: brothers and half-brothers being turned into uniquely different groups regardless of having historical agnatic links. Ake (1993: 1) further avers that “colonial administrators relied... on indigenous structures and in the process altered power relations within traditional structures of which the residue was political competition among people.” This resultantly politicized *ethnicity* as *mahosi* manoeuvred their way inherit power. The evidence and testimony above strengthen the saying that “the end justifies the means”. In short, the salient point to raise here, following the statements by Van Vuuren, Khangala and Ake above, is that the apartheid system gradually became attractive to *mahosi* in general.

This argument should be pitted against the fact that in the past there had been resistance to white occupation and subjugation. Khangala (1999: 27) further claims that *mahosi* had hoped to regain the respect, power and dignity that they had lost as a result of colonialism, evidence that they did not understand the morass they had embedded themselves into. The truth of the matter is that the respect, power and dignity would not have been restored because the same dynastic history had been manipulated and captured to serve colonial and apartheid ends. Thus these individual *mahosi* were actually trying to whistle through the wrong organ, the nose: an exercise which was highly impossible. This should be understood against the backdrop that by this time communities no longer depended on them for allocation of land, such that the traditional bond that existed before had been torn to shreds by the colonial and apartheid policies. In short, ‘tribal’ authorities transformed Vhavenda traditional system and undermined traditional customs as white authorities took over the succession process as well as the appointment, elevation and removal of *mahosi* (VG 2(1): Commission of Inquiry into Venda Vhuhosi Affairs, 1989: 281, 402, 419).

Towards the creation of ‘tribal’ authorities Vhavenda and Vatsonga/ Shangaan had been harmoniously living side by side in Venda, a situation which changed during the late 1950s when they were separated due to forced removals and the designation of areas for the latter as efforts to distinguish the two groups as unique ethnic groups

gained momentum. In the same vein *mahosi* or *tihosi* (the Xitsonga/ Xichangana version of *mahosi*) and communities were equally created for Vatsonga/ Machangana (Khangala, 1999: 37; Nemapate, 1998: 3). As clearly put by Nemapate (1998: 3) cleavages which developed out of the formation of *ethnic* homelands were not natural, but a result of the apartheid plan which evolved around a policy of differentiation on the grounds of *ethnicity*. The *ethnic* card had evidently become a tool to weaken and play the opposition down and thus became a tool of control and oppression. In the same vein the *ethnic* card inculcated *ethnic* prejudice amongst black South Africans who had established a harmonious living relationship amongst themselves. To consolidate these political structures ('tribal', regional and territorial authorities) were made identical with nationality, just like they did with the creation of *mahosi* who were made to morph into 'tribal', regional and territorial authorities, in that order (Nemapate, 1998: 15). This was a caricature of the newly adopted racial and *ethnic* policy that Khangala (1999: 27) said proved deeply attractive to *mahosi/ tihosi*.

3.5 Conclusion

This chapter focussed much on the development of identity by looking at the concept generally and then navigated towards the question of Vhavenda *ethnicity* and *ethnic identity*. Thus the line of discussion revolved around *ethnicity* and *ethnic identity* in South Africa as a construction of colonialism and apartheid. Various sources assisted in this broad discussion. The discussion on the *ethnic*, *ethnicity* and *ethnic identity* aimed at levelling the playing field towards the colonial creation of 'ethnic group' vis-à-vis 'tribe'. The discussion helped to denude the fact that in the process of the creation of Vhavenda 'ethnic group' and the 'tribalisation' project Eurocentric influenced historians, ethnographers and anthropologists alike concocted the idea that Vhavenda, regardless of history pointing to the contrary, were homogenous by using the history of Vhavenda during and post-Thohoyandou's era. This chapter attempted to argue against this claim because it was being touted for ulterior colonial and apartheid objectives.

As put by Ngwako Modjadji (*City Press*, Sunday 4, November 2018) what we know today as the Limpopo Province (a province which was carved out of the colonial and apartheid Transvaal) is home to 'ethnic groups' distinguished by race, culture and

language, a product of 'tribal' group creation, the development of *ethnicity* and *ethnic identity* which laid the basis of apartheid politicisation thereof. For *mahosi* to believe that apartheid could restore the respect, power and dignity of their subjects bordered on naivety and befuddlement of the highest order since these elements were lost when they agreed to be political eunuchs of the colonial and apartheid authorities. In the process of losing these values, the powers that be even divided communities that were living harmoniously together while they embarked on the policy of 'tribalisation' which in a sense was replacing the regionalisation that had been achieved by legendary *mahosi* of Vhaventxa.

The current researcher also raised a concern about the Eurocentric influence on some authors who from their own admission chose to describe Vhaventxa as a homogenous people regardless of their different origins and histories. In this regard it became apparent that this homogenisation of Vhaventxa as a people was a deliberate attempt, which of course succeeded, to view them as a single entity for the sake of the 'tribalisation' project of colonialism and apartheid. This 'tribalisation' project fitted well into the "divide and rule" policy of the time. The current researcher argued against this perceived homogeneity and advanced salient points in this regard.

Regardless of this the policy went ahead with '*ethnicisation*' of Vhaventxa into distinct groups under various *mahosi* who were created as independent on the road to their 'tribalisation'. In this regard the powers that be were hell-bent on diluting their political resistance to the political developments that descended on them. This also went further to inculcate *ethnic* attitudes among people who had been living together for a number of years. The next chapter explores the changing relationship between *vuhosi* of Vhaventxa and the white authorities during the different stages in South Africa's political history.

Chapter 4

The Changing Power Relations between the South African Government and *Mahosi* within the Venda Homeland

“To know what is right and to not do it is the worst of cowardice.” (Chinese Philosopher Confucius, quoted by Farouk Arie in the *Sowetan Letters*, Tuesday October 9, 2018).

4.1 Introduction

Prah is quoted by Bankie and Angula (2000: 50; as cited in Van Rensburg, 2013: 26) remarking that whether African states “were great empires or modest political entities, they were generally well-organised and able to maintain law, order and social harmony. This political stability both within and among African states was conducive to healthy economic development. The Africans, whether farmers or artisans, displayed remarkable versatility and varieties of talents and tastes.” As if to support this contention Shillington (1985: 9) asserts that accompanying this was cultivation which formed a potential means of private accumulation by the individual common householder. Given the short explanation on *dzunde* in the previous chapter(s), it means that communalism did not necessarily preclude the individual householder from experiencing socio-economic transformation through accumulation. Bankie and Angula (2000: 50; as cited in Van Rensburg, 2013: 26) again take a leaf from Prah by mentioning that within the same socio-economic and political setup “African societies throughout the continent were devoid of national political borders because the states, kingdoms, empires and societies never had defined boundaries as such. What existed were cultural frontiers between linguistic groupings, with various other interactive means of communication and association between cultures.”

The above paragraph serves to paint a picture of African values that were founded on ordered political, social and economic relationships and respect for others in the same socio-political space. Irrespective of the absence of political borders, there was intercultural relations which contributed to human dynamism and served as a boon to both economic interaction and development in pre-colonial times. According to Stanley

Maphologela and Trevor Ngwane³⁶ (*City Press: Voices*, 11 October 2015: 3) “the right set of African values include discipline, focus, honesty, integrity, transparency, hard work and love for Africa and its people.” This statement further enriches Prah’s sentiments and goes a long way to encapsulate the essence of African values systems which enriched inter- as well as intra-cultural and linguistic human existence. Flowing from above the current researcher hopes to navigate towards the core of communal existence in Africa which pivoted around African values and determined the tenets of governance, *vhuhosi* in general, and *vhuhosi* of Vhavenda in particular.

In this regard the paragraph above hopes to set the tone of this chapter in order to encapsulate the nature of African political, social and economic existence. From above it is evident that inter-cultural relations which were also a catalyst for a healthy economic development was in conflict with hegemonic Eurocentric objectives that tended to contort the relationship between *vhuhosi* in Africa *vis-a-vis* *vhuhosi* of Vhavenda and the South African government on the one hand and the relationship between *vhuhosi* of Vhavenda and missionaries on the other. To support this impact of hegemonic Eurocentric objectives, Bankie and Angula (2000: 26; as cited in Van Rensburg, 2013: 26) quote one Inkuri explaining that “the elimination of population expansion that was in progress up to the 16th century, brought to a halt processes leading to the expansion of intra-African trade, the development of internal markets and market institutions, the commercialisation of agriculture and a general development of the division of labour.” This according to Van Rensburg (2013: 26) stunted population growth. Population growth was highly essential to communal agricultural production which depended on cultivation, which in turn was essential to the socio-economic welfare of the community under *vhuhosi* and institutions.

In this instance Fick (July 13 to 19 2018: 34) avers that these hegemonic influenced relationships “afforded the conquerors a way to order the world, thereby controlling it more easily”. In the same vein Fick contends that the “definition and history of ‘race’ and *ethnicity*, as figured in South African history, are inextricably linked to colonial conquest” (2018: 34). The preceding statements sum up the relationship between

³⁶ Stanley Maphologela is/ was spokesperson for the City of Johannesburg’s Group Finance; Trevor Ngwane is/ was political officer of the Soweto Electricity Crisis Committee.

vhuhosi and the South African government on the eve of apartheid; a relationship based on conquest and control. The current researcher hopes to use the preceding statements as a basis to explore the changing power relations between the South African government and *mahosi* of Vhavenda, from colonialism, the period of the reserves and self-government through to an 'independent' Vhavenda homeland.

Needless to say, the subject of *vhuhosi* in South Africa has been the subject of much debate by scholars; some of whom are Du Plessis (1955), Bekker (1991 and 1993), Khangala (1999), Oomen (2000), Ntsebeza (2005) and Logan (2009), among others. Although this might have included debates on the relationships between *mahosi* and the South African government during the various stages towards the political development of *ethnic* homelands, there is no gainsaying that this was not embarked on from an Afrocentric perspective. It is for this reason that this study regards this as an unchartered territory which; affords it an Afrocentric centre stage. Ironically, in the past the relationship between *mahosi* and the South African government was 'cosmetised', put under the 'spell of missionaries' and cloaked in the mist of homeland policy which gullibly impersonated dualism, equal as well as parallel partnership and existence. According to Shai (2018: 267) it is apparent that the institution and processes involved in *vhuhosi* have been deliberately less understood throughout the history of South Africa, including since the dawn of the third wave of democratisation of the 1990s. In other words the focus on the relationship between *vhuhosi* of Vhavenda, and the South African government did not receive the academic justice it deserves inasmuch as it was influenced by Eurocentric scholarship and practices.

Reminiscent of the above quotation by the famous Chinese Philosopher Confucius, the current researcher intends to set the tone of the discussion of this chapter by adopting an erudite frame of mind, so as to adhere to an epistemological centredness; one of the cornerstones of the Afrocentric perspective. According to Mazama (2003: 5, as quoted in Pellerin, 2012: 150) a scholar should be a "self-willed agent instead of an object of investigation". Equally the current researcher wishes to take a leaf from Asante's dictum which states that "Afrocentricity serves as the establishment of the subject place of Africans and the destruction of the compliance with the European ideas and concepts by Africans" (Asante, 1988: 6, also quoted in Pellerin, 2012: 150). Conscious of the above, the current researcher feels duty bound to extricate oneself

from the 'cowardice' alluded to above and use it as a rubric to do justice by exploring the changing relationship between *mahosi* of the former Venda homeland and apartheid South Africa's government. Therefore, this chapter attempts to denude the grotesque reality that the said relationship focused on regarding *mahosi* as eunuchs who capitulated to the powers that be by selling out on their African values: customs, culture, tradition and the dignity that originally symbolised the caricature of their political institutions, which included the values listed above by Maphologela and Ngwane (2015: 3). Accompanying the above argument is an attempt by the current researcher to expose the fact that apartheid South Africa's *raison d'être* that was the blueprint of its political development was not an indictment of its 'ignorance' of the centrality of African values to *vuhosi*, but the 'cowardice' within the internal realpolitik which motivated its racial oligarchy which was hell-bent on self-aggrandisement.

Compact Oxford English Dictionary (2013: 852) defines realpolitik as "politics based on practical considerations rather than moral or ideological principles". Departing from the above, the current researcher argues that during colonisation and apartheid alike, the powers that be derived cultural notions from their hegemonic Eurocentric social sciences such as ethnology, social and political anthropology to justify their invidious policies, a sentiment equally raised by Halala (2011: 80). As a result black South Africans, and *vuhosi* as well as institutions in particular, were viewed through a myopic lens, as being innately cultural, politically and economically inadequate and deficient, such that in the quest for self-aggrandisement the whites did "not take into consideration the historical, social or contemporary experiences of Africans" (Pellerin, 2012: 149). Resultantly the apartheid *apparatchik* dictated policy to black South Africans, who they regarded as objects rather than partners in socio-political and economic decision making. Admittedly, this was in disregard of the centredness of customs, culture, tradition and heritage which were inseparable from African values that characterised *vuhosi* and institutions to cowardly build an apartheid oligarchy. Similarly Halala (2011: 71) avers that the introduction of the homeland policy during South Africa of the 1950s and 1960s helped to impose an *ethnic* alliance between *mahosi* while centralising the establishment of the system. The current researcher posits in the previous chapter that during the disintegration of T̄hohoyandou's kingdom, especially after the demise of Al̄ilali Mphephu, various *vuhosi* had been created as the foundation of Vhavenda 'tribalism', and subsequently Vhavenda

homeland 'independence': the journey of colonial conquest and apartheid subjugation (SAB-NTS-77/55(I) 338. Chiefs and Headmen ref. S.14/1919: 45). Therefore the creation of such *vuhosi* went against the Tshivenda maxim which goes "*Vuhosi vhu tou bebelwa*" (which can roughly be translated as denoting that "royalty is ascribed by birth), as such these were creations outside the realm of Vhavaṅḁ customary practices and value system.

The South African authorities were blinded by 'cowardice' to be willy-nilly ignorant of the African/ Vhavaṅḁ values that governed the historical, socio-political and economic experiences that in turn governed the everyday life of which was the "quest for justice, truth, harmony... commitment to the experiences of the community... which encourage the recognition of the cultural environment of communalism rather than individual separation" (Revier, 2001: 711-713 and 719-720). Thus the principal 'moral' obligation of the apartheid authorities was to implement the policy within the realm of their ideological objectives of hegemonic paternalism, discrimination, dominance as well as "divide and rule": the central focus of which was land dispossession, control and denigration of the value laden African political institutions; thus turning *mahosi* into obsequious objects. Therefore Confucius' maxim is meant to show that the homeland policy was indeed the worst 'cowardice' of the colonial and apartheid powers hence they knew what was right but chose 'not to do it'. It is from this premise that the current researcher discusses the concept 'traditional' which the apartheid authorities used as a blueprint to craft the hegemonic and Eurocentric *ethnic* homeland policy.

4.2 The Afrocentric Value of the Concept 'Traditional'

Reader's Digest: Family Word Finder (1977) defines traditional as "something handed down from generation to generation, be it customary, conventional, habitual, established, historic and ancestral." In the same vein *Compact Oxford English Dictionary* (2013: 1099) defines traditional as "relating to or following customs or beliefs that have been passed from generation to generation." Senyonjo (2004: 2) opines that what is understood as traditional "is something done or respected according to custom from generation to generation... and accepted as authoritative, or deferred to, without argument". To cement this Senyonjo further quotes Gyekye (2004: 2) who defines traditional as "any cultural product that was created or pursued,

in whole or in part by past generations, and that having been accepted and preserved, in whole or in part, by successive generations, has been maintained to the present.” As such a cultural product would definitely be seen to be acceptable and preserved by the very people influenced and/ or affected by the same culture.

Given these definitions, logic would prevail that any people within their history, experiences and dynamism have an adherence to something which is traditional and derived from the cultural values and customs. Van Rensburg (2013: 28) cites Van der Walt (2003: 27) who points out that the belief that the European model of social order and a way of life could be transplanted effectively to Africa was a delusion. In other words this author is of the view that the imposition of the European model without respecting how the Africans themselves held high all that defined them was as good as “throwing caution to the wind”. Flowing from above the current researcher posits that it was audacious for the apartheid *apparatchik* to ‘ignorantly and cowardly’ regard the concept ‘traditional’ separate from Africa’s value laden experiences and history, at any given point in time. Van Rensburg (2013: 28) further posits that social development has to be consistent with the particular cultural and historical circumstances of the society to be stable and prosperous.

Be that as it may, informed by their Eurocentrically influenced ethnology, social and political anthropology as well as history, apartheid South Africa’s myopic outlook of black South Africans bordered on ‘cowardice and ignorance’. The powers that be had no modicum to respect African traditional values but were instead motivated by their hegemonic complacency to refine these values to the point of surreptitiously coin derogatory concepts such as ‘chiefs’, ‘paramount chiefs’ and ‘chief minister’ to enrich their apartheid lexicon; while seeking to and replacing Africa’s hierarchical system. By so doing the white oligarchy intentionally befuddled obsequious collaborators while attempting to placate the recalcitrant ones by painting derogatory and/ or denigrating concepts as politically suitable and correct, to foster power relations that went against the central value of culture, custom and tradition.

Flowing from above Pellerin (2012: 155) reminds the reader that in an Afrocentric exploration it is the responsibility of the researcher to commit to the lexical refinement that seeks to employ “terms and definitions used to define Africana people... are not

outsourced from other cultures and other people but instead are derived from Africana people and their languages.” It is in view of this fact that the current researcher chooses to adhere to Vhavenda lexicon as much as possible. Accordingly Pellerin (2012: 154) posits that the lexicon derived from Africana people and their languages “fosters the application of culturally attuned definitions of concepts used in the study and the terminology applied... culturally appropriate but non-oppressive and liberating.” Within the same stance as Pellerin, Ake (1993: 9) views the use of lexicon refined and outsourced from other cultures with vitriol if the passage below is anything to go by:

The mere adoption of the coloniser’s language as the language of politics is a serious problem for political participation in Africa. The adoption of the coloniser’s language restructures the society into a new hierarchy of power relations... So there is constituted a hierarchy at the top of which stand those who command the language, leaving the rest of society who do not understand it not only in a subordinate position, but effectively disenfranchised.

Ake’s sentiments incontrovertibly and judiciously expose a trajectory reminiscent of what Pellerin regards as the essentiality to refine the lexicon that relates to “terms and definitions used to define Africana people... are not outsourced from other cultures and other people”. Pellerin (2012: 154) emphatically argues that the contrary would be an injustice to the tenets of the cultural centredness that define the value of Afrocentric theory. It is further worth noting that Pellerin cements what Ake terms a “terminology that is culturally appropriate but non-oppressive and liberating” (2012: 154). Therefore the current researcher argues that in the absence of equivalent Africana concepts, the use of the colonial and apartheid concepts such as ‘headman’, ‘chief’, ‘chief minister’ and ‘paramount chief’ must find no room in an Afrocentric setting unless if they are depicted within inverted commas. These arguments denude the erudite thread commonly running through Pellerin and Ake regarding the contagious nature of refined or foreign lexicon in an Afrocentric setting: hence this chapter attempts to strictly employ Vhavenda concepts so as to show their hierarchical significance, relevance and appropriateness.

Senyonjo (2004: 2) maintains that the use of the word 'tradition' is not meant to diminish the cardinal position *mahosi* occupied within their communities before being overwhelmed by colonialism and apartheid. Therefore, this cardinal position of *mahosi* within their communities cements the Tshivenda dictum that goes "*khosi ndi khosi nga vhalanda*": *mahosi* were accepted by and commanded the respect of the people they ruled, because without their support there would be no one to rule. Admittedly the political history of apartheid and the use of the concepts 'tradition' and the 'traditional' by the powers that be diluted the essence of the status, image, power and authority of *mahosi* within communal settings. *Mahosi* became instruments for the promotion of denigrating policies which were juxtaposed against their original value laden position, status, role and functions as the guardians of communal norms adhered to and respected from generation to generation. According to Senyonjo (2004: 2) communal norms encompass outlooks on life, ways of relating to or resolving disputes, among others, such that *mahosi* were/ are an important channel through which socio-political and cultural transformation may be achieved. The author further contends that leaders of African institutions "include such instruments of political organisation and socialisation such as 'chief' and kings," herein called *mahosi*, and *thovhele(la)*, respectively, as well as "clan leaders and assemblies of 'chiefs'" (referred to as councils), "accountability structures and systems of dispensing political justice" (Senyonjo, 2004: 2). Therefore, realising the significance of African values to the foundations of *vuhosi* and institutions *vis-à-vis* their socio-political and economic role, colonial and apartheid authorities refined them to suit their racially and/ or ethnically impregnated policy of segregation: homeland policy.

Apparently, it is at this point that the changing power relations between the South African government and *mahosi* took off within the vagaries of racial and ethnic development of the homeland administration. From this synoptic discussion the current researcher hopes to navigate towards an understanding of the hegemonic nature of colonialism *vis-à-vis* apartheid within and through which *mahosi* were made to feel ensconced within the vagaries of a segregation policy of "divide and rule", of which the eventuality was *ethnic* homelands. It was within and through this policy that *vuhosi* and institutions were used as proponents of the black administration policy of colonialism and/or apartheid; which policy took off *vis-à-vis* their power relations with

the South African government. Flowing from above, the next subtopic departs from the socio-political and economic organisation of *vuhosi* of Vhavenda.

4.3 The Socio-political and Economic Organisation of *Vuhosi* of Vhavenda

Although much has been discussed about the political, social and economic organisation of *vuhosi* of Vhavenda in the previous chapter, the current researcher is of the view that a summation of the same is worth revisiting. According to Molo'o and Malatsi (n.d. 2) the phenomenon of *vuhosi* dates as far back as the African neo-lithic, also referred to as the food production years (5000 to 4500 B.C.). This author further asserts that this period demanded some kind of organised political and military authority needed to regulate the new civil society, to ensure the security of communities and protection of fundamental human rights. Lestrade (1930: 307-308) and "Venda: A land of independence, a land of culture (n.d.: n.p.) advance that while the political organisation of Vhavenda leans more towards Basotho/ Bapedi than towards their neighbours of Mashona, Amandebele or Vatsonga/ Machangana *vuhosi* plays an important role in the political, economic and social life of the people.

Lestrade (1930: 311) further contends that the position of *vuhosi* was characterised by a hierarchical distribution of power and authority among those responsible for administration in the land. In echoing these sentiments Heroldt and Dombo (1992: 70) maintain that prior to colonialism Vhavenda political process revolved around a three-tier system of authority reminiscent of the local, provincial and central administration as will be elaborated below. To concretise this "Venda, A land of independence: Venda, a land of cultural tradition, n.d.: n.p.) sums Vhavenda traditional practices thus:

The 'chief' is considered to be the head of his area, the father of the royal family and the living representative of the forefathers. As a result the community revolves around him, he possesses the highest legislative, executive and judicial power, and no decision on the laws concerning his territory can be binding without his consent.

Again this passage is indicative of the relationship between *khosi* and the community and further supports the dictum “*khosi ndi khosi nga vhalanda*”. However, the second part of the same passage paints a caricature of a ruler who is beyond reproach and who rams decisions down the throats of his subjects. A trip down the previous chapter shows that regardless of the powers vested in *mahosi*, the council-of-elders served as checks-and-balances, such that consensus was apparently the guiding principle in legislative, executive and judicial matters. This is not to dispute the rare occasion where the ruler would go against the advice of the council-of-elders; with the emphasis being on the rare occasion. Similarly, in an article titled “Cyril Ramaphosa endorsed oppression of rural KZN folks” one Palesa Lebitse (*Sowetan*, Tuesday July 10, 2018: 15) contends that ‘tribal’ authority is signified by forced labour, forced removals and forced marriages. By implication, in ‘tribal’ authorities ordinary members of the community enjoy(ed) no rights whatsoever. The current researcher argues that the sentiments by the previous author do not depict the true nature of African value systems. In fact Lebitse’s claims are based on generalisations stemming from President Cyril Ramaphosa’s meeting with King Goodwill Zwelithini relating to the concerns regarding the future of the land under the Ingonyama Trust. One should not be tempted to fault the author because in this regard Delius (*City Press: Voices and Careers*, 24 June 2018: 1) shows that: “In 1994, on the eve of the first democratic elections, the KwaZulu legislative assembly enacted the KwaZulu Ingonyama Trust Act. Through the enactment all the land in the former KwaZulu homeland was placed under the control of the Zulu king.” Needless to say though it suffices to say that similar developments were not recorded elsewhere in South Africa to warrant such a generalisation about ‘forced...’ character of ‘tribal’ authority as claimed by Lebitse.

Firstly, a closer look at the issue of Vhavenḁa *dzunde* practice, for example, shows that it was a communal labour practice during ploughing and harvest seasons for the benefit of and food security of both the royal family and the community at large, *alas* passed from generation to generation (“HKN 1/1/49, 16N1/1/2, Dzunde lands amongst the Venda people, 2 October 1946: 4; Khangala, 1999: 32; Kirkaldy, 2004: 13-15. See also Molo’o and Malatsi above; Van Warmelo, 1971: 356; Burman, 1981: 9). Secondly, regarding forced removals, *mahosi* held the land in trusteeship of the community and could not willy-nilly remove a person/ family except on rare circumstances such as punishment for serious offences, however at the discretion and consensus of the

council-of-elders. Therefore *mahosi* had no authority to own land privately and could not use the wealth accrued from the land arbitrarily (NTS 7787, 191/335, F1294: Chief Mphephu's complaint, from memorandum of proceeding at an indaba held in 1905.10.18 at Louis Trichardt between Venda chiefs and Sir Arthur Lawley; TAB, KLT, vol. 2/1/6, Native Locations, Mphephu's Location: Report from the Native Affairs Commissioner, Soutpansberg District, 12th September 1902; See also Burman, 1981: 26-27). Lastly, the current researcher would like to negate the generalisation of forced marriages as this is/ was not the customary practice among Vhavanḁa. Royal family marriages were negotiated according to customary practices adopted down generations between and/ or among closely related families, such that this is not a 'wake-up-in-the-morning kind of exercise' that could be regarded as 'forced since the practice had been been adopted and accepted down the generations (TAB, KLT, vol. 2/1/6, Native Locations, Mphephu's Location: Report from the Native Affairs Commissioner, Soutpansberg District, 12th September 1902). Therefore Lebitse's generalisations on the traditional, based on one incident and example are unfortunate to say the least and do not afford respect to African values that determine the political, social and cultural tenets of Vhavanḁa customary law.

In corroborating Senyonjo's summation Mashele (2004: 2) lends credence to the cultural central position occupied by *mahosi* in political institutions by reifying the essence of the uncontested predominance of *mahosi* in society during pre-colonial Africa. Mashele further encapsulates this by advancing that *mahosi* were the sole leaders with no other authority above them, such that their roles included being in charge of economic, security, legal and cultural issues within their respective polities. This boils down to *vuhosi* being recognised as entailing different structures and levels of responsibility (INLOGOV, "Traditional Leadership in Africa: A Research Report on Traditional Systems of Administration and their Role in the Promotion of Good Governance, 1995: 4). From the preceding statements it flows that the best way of viewing the nexus between *mahosi* and African communities is that they were the fathers of their respective polities and principal sources of communal unity, the vanguard of communal existence and welfare. Succinctly put in Benso (1979: 25) and Van Warmelo (1971: 356, 359) *vuhosi* is of special importance in the political life of Vhavanḁa as this symbolizes(ed) the institutional head of an area, his/ her family, the living representative of the forefathers around whom community life revolves(ed).

Therefore, in essence *mahosi* are/ were leaders of their respective communities based on their cultural centredness, customs and heritage which are/ were seen to be in conflict with Euro-American views. The central position of *mahosi* was sacrosanct and thus passed on from generation to generation within the communal life culturally embedded in Afrocentric values. In this regard Heroldt and Dombo (1992: 71) posit that *vhuhosi* is the bedrock of *Vhavenḁa* culture, tradition and politics; which the study hopes to gain traction from Afrocentric values *vis-à-vis* the legislative, executive and judicial powers.

To further cement this, one Afrocentric scholar, Bekerie (1994: 132) opines that Africa provided its peoples with “the templates of their cultural values, belief systems, philosophies, family values and knowledge of themselves and the world.” It is therefore essential for the current researcher to constantly derive wisdom from these values to drive the focus of this study; by emphasising the importance of historical, cultural and life experiences which enriched communal existence and unity. To sum up the role and functions of *mahosi* as discussed by Senyonjo and Mashele above, Kirkaldy (2004: 18) avers that the “central role was played by the *khosi*, ruler of the people and the link between the living and the ancestors.” Similarly, Ayittey (1993: 39 and 43) and Oomen (2005: 20) opine that as a ruler the *khosi* had wide-ranging powers which encompassed the political, social, judicial and religious matters. Senyonjo, Mashele, Kirkaldy, Ayittey and Oomen could not have summed the status and functions of *mahosi* any better. In this regard they paint an autochthonous³⁷ picture of precolonial *vhuhosi* and its institutions.

However, Benso (1979: 25) and Oomen (2005: 4) caution that this did not make *mahosi* absolute because *makhadzi*, *khotsimunene*, *khadzi* and *ndumi* ensured this did not happen since the council-of-elders of all *mahosi*, *magota* and *vhakoma*, added to the equation (Benso, 1979: 25). To support this Ayittey (1993: 41 and 45) avers that the *khosi* “did not generally use coercive powers to achieve unity, but instead he/ she and the councillors used persuasion and appeals to win over recalcitrant members.” In this regard Malphia Honwane (*Sowetan Letters*, Friday March 15, 2019) mentions

³⁷ *Compact Oxford Dictionary* defines the word *autochthonous* as inhabiting a place from earliest times (2013: 57).

that “a leader is one who knows the way, goes the way and shows the way... a good listener, a patient observer who takes time to think what to say to other people... is aware of own weaknesses while using strengths to empower yourself and others, thus improving the image of your institution.” From the discussion above the current researcher would like to proceed to the beginning of the indiscriminate and paternalistic transformation of *vhuhosi* and institutions.

4.4 The Assault on African Value Systems: Tempering with Vhavenda Hierarchical Structures and Related Concepts

As it has been the case with Eurocentric hegemony, colonial powers and apartheid administrators after them were vocally adverse to acknowledge the equivalence of the hierarchy of *vhuhosi* to theirs. The ultimate aim was to make *mahosi* sober to the fact that they were, and would remain, subservient to the powers that be regardless of their being autochthonous. Based on the relationship depicted in the previous chapter between *vhuhosi* and institutions *vis-à-vis* the South African government on the eve of apartheid, a relationship of conquest/ subjugation and control, *vhuhosi* was polarised from within, through collaboration and foolery. The conquest, subjugation and control of *vhuhosi* led to the denigration of its hierarchy to be the opposite of the original and historical self, through the invasion of African value systems, by introducing Eurocentrically refined foreign lexicon of concepts such as ‘chief’, ‘chieftain’, ‘paramount chief’ and ‘chiefdom’ (Department of Provincial and Local Government (DPLG), 2000: 14; *Reader’s Digest*, 1994: 531). Ironically the powers that be even went to the extent of equating ‘paramount chief’ to king, whereas in all intentions they did not want *thovhele/ thovhela* to regard himself as a counterpart of a European king: African cultural values, and Vhavenda value systems down the generations, knew *thovhele/ thovhela* as occupying the apex of political hierarchy and thus was king. The use of the term ‘king’ was never applicable by the British colonial rulers to refer to African rulers as it was reserved for the British king (DPLG, 2000: 14).

Needless to say, these newly refined and introduced concepts were not necessarily equivalents of the former selves because the end objectives of the powers that be was to place *vhuhosi* at new administrative levels to serve as instruments of colonial and later apartheid administration. Succinctly put this went against the foundations of

African values that determine(d) the uniqueness of Vhavenda history, worldview and culture, which relate(d) to shared patterns of identity. In Van Rensburg's words (2013: 39-40) "culture must be understood as the broadest frame of reference for human thought and conduct". This implies that culture defines and influences who we are. In addition culture is dynamic and changes over time and thus influences people that are exposed to it as much as it is influenced by changes beyond its immediate area of influence (Van Rensburg, 2007: 40). This author further says that "we are creations of our culture and creators of it" but contends that we cannot blindly hold on to our traditional views and ways (Van Rensburg, 2007: 40). In other words Van Rensburg is of the contention that culture, and in this case African culture, must at any given point in time give way and allow to be assimilated as well as dominated by 'other cultures' to the detriment of its own people and future generations. In this regard Ajayi as quoted in Van Rensburg (2007: 20) advances that: "If the past co-exists with the present, we cannot expect to understand the present without an effort to understand the past." The other implication is that we cannot conceive of a future and plan for it in terms of development without attempting to understand the past and the present that must arguably be juxtaposed and/ or co-exist. Therefore, the current researcher posits that we ignore the past and the culture that goes with it at our own peril.

Flowing from above, it is a generally held conception that a people without a culture has no historical roots such that the devaluing of any culture implies that such a people loses its identity if indeed "culture is the broadest frame of reference for human thought and conduct" as Van Rensburg contends. Therefore, Van Rensburg's sentiments above are unfortunate as they seem to insinuate that African culture is of less value to be assimilated and dominated by other cultures. Ironically Van Rensburg (2013: 40) then avers that African culture offers something to the world but at the same time can learn from other cultures. Although true and loaded this statement is and is relevant to the dynamic nature of any community, it depends for what objectives such is learnt from it by any group of people. Based on assertions, Van Rensburg views the value of African culture from a Eurocentric perspective such that his statements conclusively imply that African people must abandon their culture for foreign ones whereas the same cannot be said of 'other' cultures. Although Makgoba (1999: 10) agrees that cultures "... are creolising as part of and as a consequence of globalisation," the author does not necessarily imply that any peoples' culture is obsolete just as Van Rensburg

(2013: 40) asserts that it is no use to hold on to one's culture. This presents a contradiction of some sorts because if culture uniquely and closely refers to human thought and conduct, what then is a people without its historical connection to it. It is from this premise that the current researcher concludes that as long as foreign contact dilutes, devalues and denigrates African culture for hegemonic Eurocentric advantages, it does so at the point of destruction of African values: the essence of cultural human thought, conduct and identity.

The current researcher would further like to advance that one of Van Rensburg's statements epitomises the after effects of colonialism and apartheid as the author appears to defend African rulers who were surreptitiously weakened to the point of looking down upon their own cultures or allowed themselves to misuse their own cultures, thus capitulating to colonial and apartheid overtures. In this way the powers that be swayed them to their whims to the detriment of African value systems that defined *vhuhosi* and institutions. Therefore, it is important to attempt comprehending the school from which the author arrived at in concluding that there is no need to hold on to one's culture because the corollary means strictly and unflinchingly adopting 'other' cultures. According to Van Rensburg the effect of the stronghold of colonial rule on *vhuhosi* and institutions as well as on respective communities during the creation and 'legitimation' of some *vhuhosi* and ethnic political groups was neither here nor there. The polarising effect that colonialism had on the fabric of *vhuhosi* and what it stood for should have presented this author with an opportunity to sympathise with the affected people in the face of what this did to *vhuhosi* and institutions, recalcitrant *mahosi* and their respective communities.

In summary, colonial rule coordinated and transformed *vhuhosi* and their communities by undermining African value systems to establish and secure the existence of strong colonial administrations (INLOGOV, 1995: 20). As a result political structures that colonial authorities designated as 'ethnic' were given a certain degree of 'legitimacy' through the trappings of power, which bordered on materialism: a practice which was absolutely anti-African value systems especially in the eyes of respective traditional communities (SAB-URU-843/896-5677: Duties and powers of Regional Authorities; SAB-URU-5598-2017: Aanwysing van P.R. Mphephu as voorsitter van gebiedsowerheid, Noordelike Gebied; SPP vol. 5, 1983: 7). There is no gainsaying

that all these changes, a result of the hegemonic assault by colonialism and apartheid, weighed on African/ Vhavanḁa hierarchical concepts because the Eurocentric influence fitted within the destructive and cacophonous colonial and apartheid oligarchy. Ayittey (1993: 39) further argues that the term 'chief' is used indiscriminately to represent a king, a 'chief' or even a 'headman'; but in the African hierarchical system of authority, the 'chief' is the person immediately subordinate to the king.

Flowing from above it is worth reminding that within Vhavanḁa value systems of socio-political organisation '*thovhele/ thovhela*' occupied the apex of the hierarchy of *vuhosi* and thus represented the highest royal title of the institution: an equivalent to sovereign kingship or even 'supreme ruler' elsewhere (Khunou, 2009: n.p.; Nemudzivhaḁi, 2017: xix, 5). In addition '*thovhele/ thovhela*' was a symbol of unity and reverence in a Vhavanḁa polity. In retrospect, there is no gainsaying that colonial powers deliberately ignored the fact that among African/ Vhavanḁa value systems such a status occupied an equivalence to kingship as it existed elsewhere. This must be looked at from the context of its 'asymmetrical' status to that of Europe in terms of international prestige between the metropolitan states and their colonised states. In this regard this is reminiscent of the quotation from Confucius above regarding 'cowardice' *vis-à-vis* 'ignorance'. Similarly, the current researcher cites Nemudzivhaḁi (2017: 5) who reminds us that the colonial administration addressed *Thovhele* Makhado differently when it suited them such that the current researcher contends that it bordered on ridiculing its status and symbolism: 'kapitein' (captain), 'hoofdkapitein' (senior captain) or 'opperhoofd' (higher leader). They corrupted hierarchical concepts as they never bothered to understand the true nature and significance of Vhavanḁa socio-political organisation unless if it was in their own terms.

The current researcher mentioned earlier that the subjugation of Vhavanḁa in 1899 saw their area subdivided into white commercial farms, trust farms, crown lands and reserves. Therefore, individuals like Kutama, Sinthumule and several other *mahosi* of Vhavanḁa had been granted the leverage to secede from the main house of Ṭhohoyanḁou or Ramabulana, as more *mahosi* were created and recognised as 'independent' entities. These individuals felt deserving of a degree of 'independence', after their betrayal of Aḁilali Mphephu with the cooperation of a combined forces of the

whites, Vatsonga/ Machangana and Amaswazi regiments (SA LDE 202 1082/17. Secretary for Lands- Secretary to the Locations Commission, 1906.01.12; Nemudzivhaḡi, 1977: 62, 169; Benso/ RAU, 1979: 22). Whereas they previously belonged to the same royal family regardless of occasional internal tensions, this development introduced a new relationship among brothers and half-brothers alike.

However, the creation of several independent *mahosi* also came with its own challenges of administration because their number had increased threefold in a short space of time. In order to get out of this quagmire the white administration introduced a form of “indirect rule” through these ‘independent’ *mahosi*, who were not really independent inasmuch as they were products and instruments of colonial administration: they were administering on behalf of and in line with foreign rule through native and sub-native commissioners. It is worth reminding that this arrangement was paternalistically imposed on *mahosi*, both collaborative and/ or created ones as well as the ones who tried to resist white interference into their affairs. Although the recalcitrant *mahosi* saw through the shortcomings of the new arrangement, they somewhat accepted it reluctantly and begrudgingly, especially as they were never consulted about it and on any other matter in the years that followed (TA GOV 1152 PS 50/37/08. Telegram to Governor of the Transvaal to Secretary of State, 1908.09.19. Powers of paramount chiefs; VG, Commission of Inquiry into Venda Vhuhosi Affairs, 2(2), 1990/1: 728-738).

During the early period of colonial rule, the colonial government exercised minimal local administration at ‘tribal’ level because *mahosi* were allowed maximum independence in administration and the maintenance of law and order (INLOGOV, 1995: 74). However, following resistance from Aḡilali Mphephu to colonial occupation and control, like his father Makhado did before him, he had his status downgraded to that of ‘chief’ at the close of the Mphephu-Boer War in 1898. This was an equivalent of *khosi* which is the third lower rung within Vhavenḡa hierarchy; regardless of the fact that he had been installed according Vhavenḡa royal customary value systems as ‘*thovhele*’ or king. In other words this new arrangement deliberately overlooked the second most important lower rung of *khosikhulu*; which the colonial and apartheid

powers later designated as 'paramount chief' during the era of Vhavenda homeland 'independence'. True to its meaning 'paramount chief' was never meant to be an equivalent of kingship as intended to make *mahosi* believe by colonial powers such that when Alilali Mphephu died in 1924, his son George Mbulaheni was installed as a *khosi* by the white colonial authorities (URU 1910 3305 Appointment of George Ramabulana as chief). This made him the first Vhavenda ruler to be installed by white authorities, contrary to Vhavenda customary practices: signalling the installation of a *khosi* by white authorities, like it happened to his successor son Patrick Mphephu in 1950 (SAB-URU-2721-648: Appointment of P.R. Mbulaheni (Mphephu) as chief of Bavenda tribe, Louis Trichardt, 1950; TA GOV 1089 PS 50/8/1907. Location Commission 38/06. Report of Native Location Commission on the Location for the chief Mpefu (sic). Pretoria 1907.04.08; Van Warmelo, 1940: 42; Nemudzivhadi, 1989: 9-10; Venter, 1976: 188).

This is evidence of the damage inflicted on Vhavenda value systems as a result of interference by colonial powers, and apartheid powers after them. This interference has eroded the humanist essence of African value systems, of which the bedrock remains a family and *ubuntu/ botho* (Shai and Iroanya, 2014), which in Tshivenda is called *vhuthu*. Similarly, it is the contention of the current researcher that this has done irreparable damage to the institution of *vhuhosi*. Therefore it is worth noting that the misuse, abuse and misrepresentation of the title '*thovhele*' by Tshivhase royalty, and other *mahosi* elsewhere around Venda, clearly encapsulates what is referred to as the continuation and enforcement of 'legitimacy' through the trappings of power (SAB-URU-3650-756: Omskrywing van die gebiede van sekere gedeeltes van die Venda en Shangaanstam. Aanstelling van sekere kaptein en instelling van sekere Bantoe-stam-owerhede in die Distrik Louis Trichardt, 1957-1957; SAB-URU-NTS-8941-177/362(1): The establishment of Mphephu, Kutama and Sinthumule Tribal Authorities. Extension of boundaries; SPP, 1983: 7).

The discussion about Vhavenda homeland attempts(ed) to show that *Khosi* Patrick Mphephu, later referred to as 'chief minister' by the apartheid authorities, thus meaning the most senior minister in Venda, whose status had ironically been downgraded to that of a *khosi*, was later designated as the 'most senior chief' in Venda, 'paramount

chief' in the homeland system nomenclature. Ironically, during the period of an 'independent Venda' the same 'paramount chief' had been appointed 'president' of a homeland, further violation and denigration of African value systems (VG, D.J.H. le Roux. Report of the Commission of Inquiry into the Causes of the Unrest and Ritual Murders in Venda during 1988/89; VG, Commission of Inquiry into Venda Vhuhosi Affairs, 2(2), 1990/1; INLOGOV, 1995: 21; Khangala, 1999: 90). The essence of introducing the position of 'paramount chief' was meant to impress on all and sundry that he was above all *mahosi* of Vhavanḁa in status. In all practical terms this had presented the white authorities with an opportunity to restore the original and true status of *thovhele* to the house of Thohoyanḁou. Ironically, the application of certain apartheid hierarchical concepts such as 'paramount chief', which was supposed to mean *khosikhulu*, did not in any way translate into the restoration of original power and authority in line with African/ Vhavanḁa value systems because Patrick Mphephu continued as a salaried agent of the apartheid administration (Oomer-Cooper, 1987: 229). The restoration process of 'paramountcy' was never meant to restore the pre-colonial status and powers of *thovhele* or even *mahosimahulu* of Vhavanḁa (TAB-GOV-1152-PS 50/37/08. Native: Powers of paramount chiefs).

According to colonial and apartheid lexicon 'paramount chief' meant a chief of great significance or a supreme ruler (*Reader's Digest*, 1994: 536), however the true application of 'supreme ruler' thereof betrayed what the colonial and apartheid authorities intended it to serve because the same concept 'supreme chief' referred to the Governor-General who was more powerful than 'paramount chief'. The same had been empowered to create and/ or divide communities into 'tribes' and to appoint any person he chose as a 'chief' or 'headman' (DPLG, 11 April 2000: 14). The power to appoint *mahosi*, which power had originally been vested in the supreme *vuhosi* level of *thovhele* in the pre-colonial period, was later re-assigned to the President of the Republic of South Africa in 1961, to the leaders of homeland governments upon attainment of self-government status and to the Transkei, Bophuthatswana, Venda and Ciskei (TBVC) states upon being unilaterally steered towards apartheid designated homeland 'independence' (DPLG, 11 April 2000: 25). This clearly violated the African cultural value of *vuhosi* and denigrated its values systems because a European should not have stooped so low as to identify and appoint successors to such a sanctified position. According to African/ Vhavanḁa value systems a *thovhele*

is/ was supposed to be above political influence and be afforded the respect befitting the administrative status and symbolism of the title. One Fani Ncapayi (*City Press Voices*, 15 January 2017: 5) avers that these “provisions go against a common and long-established customary practice in hundreds of villages around the country where communities elect their own headmen.”

In the same breath it is worth noting that the identification of George Mbulaheni and Patrick Mphephu, as successors to the Ramabulana throne, respectively, was within the parameters of their royal family’s customary law. However, the status and appointment thereof was determined by white authorities, and thus interfered with Vhavenda cultural values as it was done by foreigners. In the same vein the titles of *thovhele* and *khosikhulu* were done away with during the rule of Aḽilali Mphephu through to Patrick Mphephu’s ‘homeland’ era and downgraded to *khosi*, an equivalent to the colonial ‘chief’. This made a mockery of the whole process and the sanctified symbol of *vhuhosi* and institutions. However, this continued to be used as a rallying point of all members of the community towards a dream of a homeland ‘ethnic nationalism’ (INLOGOV, 1995: 21; Khangala, 1999: 5-6). What the authorities intended ‘chief’ to mean was a head of or leader of a clan or group of clans who ruled over a ‘chiefdom’ in line with their objectives and it also meant the extent of a ‘chief’s power or influence (also called ‘chieftain’). The title *gota/ khosana* or *vhamusanda* was given an equivalent meaning of ‘headman’ or ‘sub-chief’, with *mukoma* (at the bottom rung according to Vhavenda socio-political organisation) referred to as ‘petty headman’ (SAB-NTS-77/55(I) 338, ref. S.14/. Chiefs and Headmen, 1919: 45; *Reader’s Digest*, 1994: 531; INLOGOV, 1995: 21; Van Warmelo, 1971: 362, 363).

Essentially Vhavenda administrative levels gradually lost their pre-colonial and cultural value in line with Vhavenda value systems of custom and tradition: the significance of *vhuhosi* in position, nature, status, role and functions from time immemorial. This must be understood against the background that African value systems sanctified the operation of *vhuhosi* and its institutions in line with culture, customs and tradition (DPLG, 2001: 1 of 3). Shillington (1985: 9) cements the administrative machinery of African value systems thus: “the chief exercised control of the land and its resources through the headmen of the wards who subdivided their allocation according to the needs of families within the ward.” This shows that regardless of being African in

nature this administrative machinery was organised, sophisticated and respected in its own right and had various levels. The effect of Mphephu-Boer War follows below.

4.4.1 The aftermath of the Mphephu-Boer War of 1898-1899 and the enactment of the South Africa Act of 1909

The period that followed the defeat of Alilali Mphephu and the subjugation of Vhavenda saw various key pieces of legislation put in place and continued with the political assault on traditional administrative hierarchy just as it was intentioned during the eras of Ramabulana and Makhado; to a lesser degree as it was indicated earlier in the discussion, though more pronounced after the defeat of Alilali Mphephu. Therefore the organization of the dominant classes and the disorganization of the dominated classes are/ were essential aspects of the general role of the state in capitalist social formations (SPP vol. 5, 1983: 5). During this period of organization and disorganization some collaborative *mahosi* saw this as an opportunity to retain the political power and influence they lost during their defeat and subjection before colonialism whereas inherently, underlying these changes was the disruption of the political, social and economic life of black South Africans. In essence and ironically, the central aim of the powers that be was to deal with the so-called “black problem” (Khangala, 1999: 27; Venter and Landsberg, 2011: 6).

The irony behind this so-called “black problem” was that the white authorities saw black South Africans as an impediment to their imperial, and later apartheid racial policy, which included the excision of land and the continual erosion of their economic as well as political rights through numerous forced removals. This exercise started with the appointment of commissions to deal with the land problem, a precursor of the infamous Natives Land Act of 1913 (GOV 1086 and 1089, PS 50/8/07: Location Commission History of Native Tribes, Chiefs Mpefu (sic Mphephu), Sintumula (Sinthumule), Kutama, Tengwe (Nethengwe), Ramaputa (Rammbuda), Ndabane (Davhana), Molimo (Mulima), Maemu, Netseanda (Netsianda), Mgibi (Mugivhi), Lomondo (Lwamondo) and Madzibandela (Madzivhandila); Thoho-ya-ndou Territorial Authority: Sibasa, Minutes of Third Sitting, 12th-16th October, 1964). From the preceding discussion it suffices to say that in South Africa the state’s disorganization strategies were direct, extreme and vicious, as the focus on the related legislation attempts to show below. The system of ‘reserves’ (areas designated for occupation by

black South Africans under respective *mahosi*) dates back from the colonial period (SPP Reports, vol. 1983: x). However, the policy of Bantustans/ homelands introduced further socio-political disorganization and disorientation of *vuhosi* and institutions due to ethnic fragmentation and racial definitions that were imposed during segregation of the early apartheid period. The state employed 'ethnic mobilisation' within the territorial units of Bantustans/ homelands, based on the only regions left to the conquered cultural groups of southern Africa at the end of the nineteenth century (SPP Reports, vol. 5, 1983: 6 and 11). According to Oomen (2005: 2) as well as Venter and Landsberg (2011: 15) *ethnic* mobilisation was so much about reorganization for political action of *ethnic*, 'tribal', religious, cultural or racial groups and 'chiefdoms' around the idea of inherent superiority of that group as it was done by the apartheid administration.

In addition, as indicated by the names of *mahosi* of Vhavenḁa listed earlier above, the disorganization process went hand in hand with the parcelling out of the land into 'reserves' and later the establishment of native locations that had shrunk in size as a result of the designation of territories for the created *vuhosi* as well as promoted *mahosi* of respective communities (URU 524 2265. Appointment of certain chiefs for the purpose of exercising jurisdiction; Thoho-ya-ndou Territorial Authority: Sibasa, Minutes of Third Sitting, 12th-16th October, 1964). In addition to this, while in pre-colonial South Africa *mahosi* administered all the land in their respective areas, during the process of the changes brought in by colonisation and later the apartheid regime, *mahosi* and some cultural groups were forcibly removed from their traditional lands. Resultantly the land was rezoned into freehold and sold mostly to white commercial farmers while the communities were forced to offer cheap farm labour (INLOGOV, 1995: 37 and 74). In line with these disorganization the efforts by white authorities at excising land and the designation of individuals as *mahosi* meant that they saw black South Africans, and Vhavenḁa in particular in this instance, as a 'real problem' to their socio-political and economic hegemony in the Soutpansberg area. According to Khangala (1999: 9) Aḁilali Mphephu accepted the authority of the whites inasmuch as his area had been reduced in size after his defeat and had been left undeveloped agriculturally to break his longstanding resistance to white occupation, domination and control.

From these statements, it must be clear at this point that the problem for the powers that be was that they viewed black South Africans as a socio-political stumbling block for the white administration which was hell-bent on imposing everything. The white administration ignored the value laden nature of *vhuhosi* and institutions while disregarding problems faced by *mahosi* as they continued in the process of reducing their land and historical traditional powers (TA GOV 1152 PS 50/37/08. Telegram to Governor of the Transvaal to Secretary of State. Powers of paramount chiefs, 1908.09.19: 10; VG, Venda Vhuhosi Affairs, 2(2), 1990/1: 728-738). Ridiculously the centrality of the problem was not black South Africans as well as *vhuhosi* and institutions but the 'ignorance and cowardice' by the real proponents of the colonial and/ or apartheid system; which thus introduced various accompanying legislation while indiscriminately raping and assaulting the African value systems that founded *vhuhosi*. At the basis of these legislation was ignorance of African values closely tied to black South Africans by foreign powers during the appointment and imposition of illegitimate and collaborative individuals as *mahosi* where after they were used to promote illegitimate discriminatory and segregation policies (Shai, 2018: 268; Ncapayi, *City Press Voices*, Sunday 15 January, 2017 : 5). It would be the naïveté of the worst kind to believe that within the Eurocentric political development *vhuhosi* did not suffer the worst, if not the irreversible degradation and disruption.

Not only have the colonial and/ or apartheid system undone most of the African value systems around which *vhuhosi* was founded, but the original cultural essence thereof has been lost. In the words of Lekgoathi (2013: 14) as quoted in Shai (2018: 269), "... the erosion of the democratic ingredients of 'traditional leadership' during the colonial and apartheid era is an unfortunate and dangerous situation which has also cast aspersions on its relevance..."; which ingredients have also been referred to in Benso (1979: 25) above during the discussion on the nature of *vhuhosi* of Vhavenḁa and institutions. That being said Shai (2018: 269, quoting from Thotse, 2014) further posits that "while it is common knowledge that there are some *mahosi* who tolerated, submitted to and cooperated with colonialists and the apartheid regime at the expense of their own people, South Africa's new constitutional order is to a large extent the appreciation of the struggles waged by some *mahosi* in the war against colonial and apartheid tendencies." In this regard notable figures such as Makhado, Aḁilali Mphemphu, Sekhukhune and Dingaane come to mind. Similarly, while some *mahosi*

aligned themselves with national independence and liberation struggles, many did not and allowed themselves to be used to defend the colonial order (INLOGOV, 1995: 7). According to Shai (2014: 266) while many *mahosi* allowed themselves to be trapped in the materialistic madness and trappings of the homeland system, some risked their survival in the midst of colonial and apartheid madness which robbed *vhuhosi* of its central African and cultural value systems. The passage below encapsulates the essence of the acceleration of the change in the relationship between *mahosi* and the colonial and/ or apartheid governments (INLOGOV, 1995: 20):

First the traditional kings were re-designated as paramount chiefs (or other names according to territory) to make distinctions from the monarchies known in Europe. Secondly, they were made natural rulers of small territorial units (chiefdoms) subordinate to the central colonial administration.

Conclusively, therefore from the passage above it shows that the role of *mahosi* altered significantly over time. This means that instead of them acting as independent rulers they had to submit and subject themselves to the authority of the racial state which prescribed new rules and regulations for the exercise of their local authority (INLOGOV, 1995: 20 and 22). It is in view of the above that the discussion below focuses on the introduction of disruptive legislation that was introduced by various administrations even before the establishment of the Union of South Africa.

4.4.1.1 The defeat of Aḵilali Mphephu *vis-à-vis* the question of taxation and land administration

Earlier discussions have shown that the relationship between colonial authorities and *mahosi* was dominated by conflict over the occupation of land and the collection of taxes on their behalf; hence the “Mphephu-Boer War of 1898-1899” (Khangala, 1999: 5). For example although Makhado resisted the introduction of taxation, in 1899 when the hut tax was introduced *mahosi* were appointed as local tax collecting officers and they received up to ten percent of the proceeds. Some of the tax paid was reportedly used for ‘development’ in education, medical care, ‘eradication’ of cattle diseases, fencing of ‘tribal’ areas, and so on, which was part and parcel of breaking the spine of resistance (INLOGOV, 1995: 75; See also Burman, 1981: 70-71). Aḵilali Mphephu had

remained resistant to this until after his defeat in 1899; his recalcitrant character being reminiscent of his father Makhado who refused to collect taxes on behalf of the white authorities subjects (Nemudzivhaḍi, 1977: 37; Khangala, 1999: 27; Netsianda, 2001: 35). Shillington (1985: 206) argues that taxation was of the intention of the government to gradually displace the authority of *mahosi* and replace it with their own form of control over people while using the same authority of *mahosi*. In essence by drawing them into their dirty work of collecting taxes they were reducing the pre-colonial autonomy of *mahosi* which was akin to reducing resistance to colonial rule. To clearly capture the influence of taxation on *mahosi* and their communities, Redding (1996: 558) posits that tax collection was a crucial ritual because it demonstrated on a yearly basis the power of the colonial state and subordination of the African subject.

Aḷilali Mphephu's prolonged refusal to submit to white authorities made it possible for the authorities to pit him in constant conflict with his half-brothers, Maemu, Kutama and Sinthumule; which later saw him offer a weakened front against his enemies. Resultantly the white authorities were able to form a united front against him in collaboration with his half-brothers Kutama, Sinthumule and several other *mahosi* of Vhavenda and Vatsonga/ Machangana during the War. For their efforts Kutama and Sinthumule were rewarded with the creation of and/ or promotion to *vhuhosi* and given land to the west of the town of Louis Trichardt to be in charge of and rule independently, whereas Mphephu was relocated to the infertile reserve in the Nzhelele Valley, the present land of the Mphephu Ramabulanas and formerly part of the larger area of the legendary *Thovhele* Ṭhohoyandou (SA LDE 202 1082/17. Secretary for Lands- Secretary to the Locations Commission, 1906.01.12: 3; Nemudzivhaḍi, 1977: 62, 166 and 169; Benso, 1979: 22).

In this way Venda was divided among seven independent *mahosi*: Mphephu, Tshivhase, Mphaphuli, Rammbuḍa, Sinthumule, Nesengani/ Davhana and Kutama, among others, thereby leaving the area open for white occupation and control. In addition, to officialise the appointment and presence of a Native Commissioner within close proximity of these *mahosi* a police station was established in 1902 at a place called Tshaḅowa in *Khosi* Tshivhase's area. This made it the first official residence of government officials in the eastern part of Venda (Bantoe Administrasie en Ontwikkeling (BAO) 4990, File 56/8/8; Nemudzivhaḍi, 1977: 169). The introduction of

administration through the Native Commissioner and the sub-native commissioner below him was in line with the colonial policy of “divide-and-rule” inasmuch as the number of *mahosi* had increased. Khangala (1999: 8) is of the view that this new form of administration was initially accepted somewhat reluctantly by *mahosi* due to the lack of consultation of the process. This is supported by evidence relating to the reduced powers of *mahosi* during the early periods of the first decade of the twentieth century relating to this arrangement especially when Ajjilali Mphephu was demoted (TA GOV 1152 PS 50/37/08. Telegram to Governor of the Transvaal to Secretary of State, dated 1980.09.19. Powers of paramount chiefs; VG, 2(2) 1990/1991: 728). Much as these politico-administrative changes were premised on the policies of colonial occupation and control of *vhuhosi* and its institutions, it affected the nature of *vhuhosi* since it violated the value systems that governed the core of its existence and administration. The colonial system of “divide-and-rule” was actually continued to be imposed on *vhuhosi* and thus lacked the element of consultative acceptance. Secondly, its lack of consultation did not reside in the value systems of *vhuhosi* which regardless of *mahosi* being the custodians of the institution “is recognised as entailing different structures and levels of responsibility” (INLOGOV, 1999: 4).

It is worth noting that unlike it is customary for *mahosi* to be in charge of and be the custodians of the land on behalf of their subjects, these changes meant that they were in turn being allocated land and be expected to administer the same on behalf of the colonial powers: this was foreign to African value systems that determined the institution of *vhuhosi*. In addition, the allocation of this land among newly created and/or promoted *mahosi* included the demarcation of land among white farmers for commercial farming as it happened after the Mphephu-Boer War of 1898, is evidence of an invasion of African value systems (TA GOV 1089 PS 50/8/1907. Location Commission 38/06. Report of Native Location Commission on the Location for the chief Mpefu (sic). Pretoria 1907.04.08; Van Warmelo, 1940: 42; Khunou, 2009: n.p.). This is also evidence of the change overtime in the relationship between *mahosi* and the colonial powers in conflict with *vhuhosi* politics and administration, the economy (the allocation of the land for various purposes) and maximum independence which included law and order.

In opposition to African value systems where *mahosi* ascended their hereditary thrones customarily, the appointment became a realm of the Governor-General; a case in point is that of Kutama and Sinthumule, Alilali Mphephu's half-brothers who were appointed as a reward for betraying him during the Mphephu-Boer War of 1898-1899. Secondly, these newly appointed and promoted *mahosi* remained in their positions on condition that "their conduct was good" (INLOGOV, 1995: 42; SA GG 1191 50/1693. Minute 50/1693, dated 1942.10.13 from Governor-General to lawyers Hellman and Baker in Johannesburg; SA URU 2353 1921 Acts of Misconduct Folio 432). Logically speaking whatever colonial powers deemed as good behaviour depended on their whim inasmuch as they could depose a '*khosi*' for 'non-collaboration' or disagreeing with their unreasonable instructions and/ or demands. Lastly, *mahosi* ceased to be custodians of their communal land because the land had been designated as state land under the guardianship of the Governor-General, inasmuch as they did this on behalf of the colonial powers (TA GOV 1152 PS 50/37/08. Telegram to Governor of the Transvaal to Secretary of State, dated 1980.09.19. Powers of paramount chiefs; INLOGOV, 1995: 42. See also the discussion of the Native Administration Act (Act No. 38) 1927 below). In surmise, this was another imposition of the foreign system on the administration of *vhuhosi*, which ironically was being administered by the custodians of African values and Vhavenda value systems in particular: *mahosi*. The South Africa Act of 1909 is discussed below.

4.4.1.2 The South Africa Act of 1909 and the establishment of the Union of South Africa in 1910: Implications to *vhuhosi* and institutions

The period before the formation of the Union of South Africa (UG) already had serious ramifications in relation with the disorganization of the administration of *vhuhosi* and paved the way for the establishment of 'reserves' for various cultural groups in South Africa, especially after the defeat of Alilali Mphephu (Khangala, 1999: 5). It is of no surprise that during the outbreak of the Anglo-Boer War of 1899-1902 *mahosi* were expected to assist with the enlistment of Vhavenda to participate therein. Ironically, at the same time it was feared that if Africans were armed and encouraged to shoot whites any of the opposite sides they would not resume the subordinate position that both sides would intended to after the war. Similarly, black South Africans had hoped and believed their participation in the war would have as much a positive impact on them because the subsequent policies would determine their political and economic

future for the better. They believed that they would be rewarded politically after the War by being part of a new political arrangement (Shillington, 2012: 342). However, as it turned out to be colonial powers saw the need for white political unity to weaken the power of opposition and maintain control over black South Africans; which included the need for a common approach to the problem of relations with African communities. They did this by drafting the constitution of the Union Government, which arrangement excluded consultation with black South Africans, and *mahosi* in particular (Omer-Cooper, 1987: 154, 155 and 159). Thus the journey towards South Africa's *ethnic* homelands started at its incubation phase right from the establishment of the Union of South Africa following the enactment of the South Africa Act of 1909 (SRP 6/92: Report of the Department of Native Affairs for the years 1913-1918. Presented to both houses of parliament by command of his Excellency the Governor-General).

The constitution of the Union of South Africa of 1910, designed on the Westminster model and was given birth to by the South Africa Act in 1909, also legislated the exclusion of and an onslaught on *vuhosi* and institutions as well as black South Africans in the face of its effective role in deciding their own future (South Africa: A-Z, 1982: 19; Davenport, 2000: 262-263). Ironically, the South Africa Act of 1909 had afforded the white authorities with a golden opportunity to turn around the political onslaught. Unfortunately they continued to ignore the propinquity of African values to the system of *vuhosi* and institutions as well as the affected cultural groups. In this regard Davenport and Saunders (2000: 362) contend on the one hand that the South Africa Act of 1909 had given the Union "that supreme national authority to give expression to the national will." This implies in the interest of all the inhabitants of South Africa, black South Africans included. On the other they assert that the promulgation of the constitution of the Union of South Africa in 1910 could have become the occasion for a fresh start in public life. Ironically the public life in question was not public at all as it had undermined the wisdom and will of *mahosi* in such important political matters *vis-à-vis* their communities inasmuch as the process was a constitutional imposition. In this regard it would appear as if the significance and interests of *vuhosi* and institutions was always an afterthought. The South Africa Act of 1909 prioritised white unity at the expense of *vuhosi*, their institutions and their communities as if they were of no consequence. It is in this context that after the establishment of the Union the political struggle of black South Africans continued

soon after the formation of the South African Natives National Congress (SANNC) in 1912, later to be called the ANC (the subject of another study) (Davenport and Saunders, 2000: 264-265; Omer-Cooper, 1987: 164).

Therefore, since 1910 black South Africans throughout the Union suffered the imposition of constraints without the extension of many new rights, not even the restoration of lost ones for the majority of the people (Butler, Rotberg and Adams, 1977: 19 of 220). In the same vein, according to Khangala (1999: 15) the new political dispensation introduced at the beginning of the twentieth century profoundly affected the life style of *mahosi* and their communities because the native commissioners administered the 'reserves' through them; thus a drastic and negative change in the status of *vhuhosi* and institutions. Whereas previously their authority had emanated from the prevailing customs based on Vhavanḁa value systems the South Africa Act of 1909 introduced a central authority in South Africa after 1910 which advanced the interests of foreigners at the expense and control of the indigenous people and their institutions. Therefore, the principal purpose of the UG was to ensure the security and continuation of white domination in South Africa (Shillington, 2012: 342). In this regard *vhuhosi* and institutions of Vhavanḁa gradually became legally dependent on the authority of the white government and its discriminatory as well as exclusive and oppressive policies which were not generally acceptable to their subjects (Khangala, 1999: 8, 15). Accordingly the white government's attention to customary law was not because of any particular respect for things that were African, but rather because of its administrative convenience to its objectives (Shillington, 2012: 368).

Unlike in the past where *mahosi* had full legal responsibilities within their respective polities, they were only allowed to hear petty cases and to mete out punishment on minor offences concerning traditional laws and customs. In the same vein if the subjects of *mahosi* were aggrieved with the judgments meted out against them, in most cases matters concerning land matters, they could take *mahosi* to court. (TA GOV 1152 PS/37/08. Telegram to the Governor of Transvaal to Secretary of State, dated 1908.09.19. Powers of paramount chiefs; VG: Commission of Inquiry into Venda Vhuhosi Affairs 2(2), 1990/1991: 728-738). In essence this meant that *mahosi* had lost the respect of and authority over their subjects. Therefore the South Africa Act of 1909 and the subsequent birth of the Union in 1910 had a profound impact on the lifestyle

of *mahosi* since they were administered by native commissioners outside the prescripts of African value systems; their status had been drastically changed because their administration had been centralised. This was in conflict with cultural value systems and customary practices which prevailed within particular cultural groups; they depended on the government for income and were thus expected to enforce government authority (Khangala, 1999: 15).

Mahosi had to accept that power and that authority resided with the Native Commissioner who could appoint and/ or dismiss/ depose *mahosi* at the stroke of a pen after instructions from their supervisors in Pretoria. In the previous discussions the current researcher indicated that in line with African/ Vhavenda cultural values and value systems the identification, appointment and installation of *mahosi* of Vhavenda was conducted according to customary law that had been laid and passed from generations to generations as sanctioned by the council-of-elders with the blessings of *makhadzi*. However, the last two archival references cited earlier above and below on the cases on Peter Sinthumule versus George Sinthumule and Ratshimphi Tshivhase versus Ratshialingwa Tshivhase, respectively, are classical cases of appointments, depositions and/ or dismissals of *mahosi* by white authorities because the individuals mentioned above either fell out of favour with the white authorities and were replaced by their brothers and/ or half-brothers (SA NTS 73/55 337: F 290 Minute 290 Minute 2/1/2 dated 11 October 1949 by Native Commissioner of Duiwelskloof to the Chief Native Commissioner of Pietersburg under the heading, Chief George Senthumula, Louis Trichardt: Chieftainship of Venda Tribe, Louis Trichardt area of the District Zoutpansberg; SA URU 2353 1921 Acts of misconduct, Folio 432. Afdanking van Ratshimphi Sibasa (sic Tshivhase) as hoof van die Bavenda stam te Sibasa, Tengwe and Tonondo lokasies. Distrik Zoutpandberg weens slegte gedrag en aanstelling van Ratshialingwa Tshivhase in sy plek).

In both cases misconduct (slegte gedrag) is cited as the cardinal reason for dismissal or deposition. In other words the significance of African value systems attached thereto were of no consequence such that the whims of the white authorities superseded customary law: classical cases of appointments, deposition and/ or dismissal of *mahosi* by white authorities in situations where individuals fell out of favour and were replaced by their brothers or half-brothers. It equally flows from this that in cases where

the incumbent *khosi* would be on a collision course with the administration of the day, he would be dismissed summarily. This dented the image of *vhuhosi* and institutions as well as that of the deposed *khosi* both within the royal family circles and in the eyes of the community once ruled. It would also be apparent that the charges advanced by the white administration would be trumped up as a result of the non-cooperative or recalcitrant nature of the individual found to be unfavourable to the powers that be at that point in time.

Holomisa (1998: 1-2) mentions that the administrations of *mahosi* had tenets of being democratised such that through consultation and equal partnership *vhuhosi* could have formed the basis of an inclusive rural local government. In other words naturally it should not have been the prerogative of the white administrations to empower themselves to the point of deciding about succession within *vhuhosi* on behalf of royal families and communities, especially as this happened without consultation. In addition, the structure of *vhuhosi* and institutions as shown in earlier discussions reveal that it allowed various responsibilities which were not based on a 'top-down' approach (Annexure 'B': Resolution of the House of Traditional Leaders of the Northern Province, Section 77(3), 1998: 2). In contrast, as all this was happening, this means that colonialism deprived *mahosi* and their communities of their dignity, respect, culture, as well as their land and property such that the institution ended up being grossly abused. Resultantly, the institution of *vhuhosi* was subjected to repression and was used as an instrument in the implementation of such colonial policies as indirect rule (DPLG, 11 April 2000: 7, 4 and 10). Down the years successive colonial and apartheid governments subjected *vhuhosi* and institutions to foreign systems of governance, assigned powers and functions which greatly suppressed the very operation which was founded on African value systems (DPLG, 11 April 2000: 13).

4.5 The Legislative Process: The 'Reserves', 'Tribalisation', 'Retribalisation', and Self-government

The above discussion set the tone for the discussion on the introduction of the enactment of legislation that ultimately led to the rampant assault on the nature of *vhuhosi* following the defeat of Mphephu in 1899 and the establishment of the Union

of South Africa through the South Africa Act of 1909. The essence of the discussion was to attempt to expose the fact that after the defeat of Mphaphu, black South Africans, *vhuhosi* and its institutions had been placed at the altar of colonial-political expediency. In addition the current researcher attempted to show that whereas before the final subjugation of black South Africans in 1899 they were obstinately resistant to colonial occupation and control, after the “Mphaphu-Boer War of 1898-1899” they had been placed at the mercy of colonial administration. Logically result the process of socio-political assault on *vhuhosi* and institutions started with the ‘twin events’ of the “Mphaphu-Boer” and the “Anglo-Boer War of 1899-1902”, which were equally accompanied by the enactment of the South Africa Act of 1909. This opened the floodgates for the passing of legislation that laid the foundation for the establishment of ‘reserves’, and the ‘tribalisation’ and/ or ‘retribalisation’ of black South Africans, and Vhavenda in particular, which set them on the road to prescribed and instructive *ethnic* self-government and ‘ethnic nationalism’ within homeland ‘independence’. The significance of that colonial project was that the ‘reserves’ were intended for communal land use. Although *mahosi* retained the power to allocate arable land, the ultimate control thereof remained in the hands of the colonial government, regardless of earlier efforts by *mahosi* to break colonial control over their land (Shillington, 1985: 225).

After the enactment of the South Africa Act of 1909 and the Constitution of the Union of South Africa of 1910, followed the vicious and indiscriminate assault on the land of black South Africans, and Vhavenda in particular, which shot to the sky with the enactment of the infamous Natives Land Act (Act No. 38) of 1913 discussed below (SPP vol. 5, 1983: 18). In this regard, therefore, the irreversible story of Vhavenda is vividly laid bare as a result of the 1913 Land Act which designated certain areas of land for occupation by black South Africans only, while the 1936 Land Act allocated some extra land. Similarly, in 1962 the Venda Territorial Authority (VTA) was created, and in 1969 some greater executive powers were granted to this body. In 1973 Venda was declared a self-governing ‘homeland’ with its own legislative assembly (SPP vol. 5, 1983: 18). This synopsis lays a short background of how things developed leading towards the ‘independence’ of Venda.

4.5.1 The administration of land and establishment of Vhavenda 'Reserve':

The

Natives Land Act (Act No. 38) of 1913 and the Natives Development Trust Act (Act No. 38) of 1936

The issue of land has for many years before the arrival of Europeans been a sort of a 'burning coal' such that right from the time of antiquity to the era of *Vho-Thovhele* (kings) Ramabulana, Makhado, Aļilali Mphephu and *mahosi* Tshivhase, Mphaphuli and Rammbuđa, the land had been the determinant of incessant conflict, the quest for territorial expansion and political dominance (Heroldt and Dombo, 1992: 70). Equally, during the competition for territorial expansion and political dominance among black South Africans in general, *mahosi* of Venda used the land to trump up socio-political and economic hegemony that influenced power relations. In this regard T̄hohoyandou and Makhado are stark reminders of such political legacies. This may also be seen against competing *mahosi* who fought against each other and brothers or half-brothers fighting over succession (Heroldt and Dombo, 1992: 70; Ralushai, 1978: 7 and 9). From pre-colonial times to the dawn of colonialism the likes of T̄hohoyandou, Makhado and Aļilali Mphephu were regarded as recalcitrant individuals because of their fierce resistance to colonial occupation and control of the Venda area. It is worth noting that the current researcher has not laid much emphasis on Ramabulana, Makhado's father, due to the fact that he was the first Vhavenda king to show signs of obeisance, weakness and capitulation in return for favours from colonial authorities.

Regardless of this impact of colonial and apartheid policies, this study attempts to show that Venda has served, and continues to serve, as the vanguard of its peoples' history, experiences and the foundation of a cultural centredness that influence its Afrocentric value systems. Be that as it may, down the years of Eurocentric centred power relations with *mahosi* (both colonial and apartheid alike), legislation were crafted from the conquest, "divide and rule" as well as control dimension. In the main colonialism and apartheid seized at the trope of multiculturalism of black South Africans to systematically *ethnicise*, 'tribalise' and 'retribalise' them along cultural and linguistic lines to promote their respective separate existence from the rest of South African, cloaked under the guise of separate development, while in essence the agenda was the promotion of white supremacy and self-aggrandisement (SAB-URU-3650-756: Omskrywing van die gebiede van sekere gedeeltes van die Venda en

Shangaanstaam. Aanstelling van skere kaptein en instelling van sekere Bantoe-stam-owerhede in die Distrik Louis Trichardt, 1957-1957).

For example soon after the demise of Alilali Mphephu in the aftermath of his defeat at the close of the “Mphephu-Boer War of 1898-1899”, the South Africa Act of 1909 and the Union of South Africa “... led to tribes becoming part of South Africa... in terms of the Natives Land Act (Act No. 27) of 1913 through which they lost their territory” (elsewhere referred to as the Black Land Act of 1913) (U.G. 7-19: Land Act of 1913; Bauer, 1992: 19-20; Khunou, 2009: n.p.). The Act set aside, divided and/ or designated land as areas for exclusive white commercial farms and occupation while fewer areas were reserved for black South Africans, who worked to the bone as cheap black labour in the Lowveld of the then Transvaal. According to the SPP Report, vol. 5 (1983: x) these areas were referred to as ‘reserves’ dating from the pre-apartheid period and later ‘scheduled land’ or homelands or Bantustans (see also Venter and Landsberg (2011: 6).

Ironically, Venter and Landsberg (2011: 6) aver that the ‘reserves’ that were established at the behest of the above-mentioned Act allowed “people of African traditional origin to live under tribal authorities”, while the colonial government created *ethnic* ‘reserves’ and the apartheid oligarchy established homelands, some of which were later strong-armed into ‘independence’ the during subsequent years. The current resrahcer argues that it is an insult for these authors to claim that the Act “allowed Africans” to live under traditional authorities as if that space was created by colonial governments whereas they were actually robbed of their land and political as well as economic power and authority. Truth be told these administrations actually disrupted the foundations of traditional systems which had operated from time immemorial. In fact the Act imposed the existence of Africans under traditional authorities based on colonial policies whereas history, customs, cultural practices and experiences had far exceeded the era of colonialism and apartheid administrations designating these so-called ‘reserves’ as the locus of black South Africans.

In the words of Sarakinsky (1992: 9) “the policy of separate development was premised on the (questionable) understanding that there were specific geographic areas that were the traditional territories of different black peoples and it was in these

areas where various African language and cultural groups were expected to pursue their political, socio-cultural and economic development.” Ironically it is worth noting that the authorities simultaneously and surreptitiously refined the underlying African values of these tenets to suit their own lexicon and thus assuage *mahosi*. The powers that be kept their focus on ‘capturing’, abusing, misusing and misrepresenting the African/ Vhavanḁa value systems that are/ were premised on culture, tradition and customs to craft their own policies to their benefit and to the detriment of black South Africans, and Vhavanḁa in particular. This translated into ignoring the historical, sentimental and politico-economic value of the land to *mahosi* and their communities since they had conquered and subjugated them thereby imposing on them colonial and apartheid policies control. This was regardless of being privy to the significance of the land for settlement, animal skin production, iron smelting and export, livestock grazing, mining and cultivation, as well as many other geopolitical and geo-cultural values like seasonal rituals (Van Warmelo, 1971: 15). To the whites the land under *mahosi* symbolised economic backwardness of black South Africans in general, and Vhavanḁa in particular, and an opportunity for economic power and the imposition of political hegemony. It was for this reason that when Alilali Mphephu was forcibly removed from his ancestral land, he was placed in the Nzhelele Valley which was not suitable for economic production and development as it was stony, infertile, mountainous and unsuitable for cultivation (Netsianda, 2001: 20).

According to Butler, Rotberg and Adams (1977: 11) much of the land meant for the ‘reserves’ was of “deficient quality to begin with, or deteriorated quickly under the pressure of overgrazing.” The land allocated for occupation by black South Africans was usually overpopulated by both livestock and the communities who settled therein. This would translate into a deliberate exercise to automatically contribute to the decimation of livestock as a result of shortage area for grazing, leading to dwindling ownership thereof and the descent into poverty, decadence, dependence and reliance on the status quo of white political as well as socio-economic dominance (Butler, Rotberg and Adams, 1977: 11). In this regard, Butler, Rotberg and Adams (1977: 10-11) further reiterate that black South Africans historically depended extensively on their land such that the Native Land Act of 1913 dramatically curtailed their traditional reliance on exploitable land. These authors add that as a result this encouraged able-bodied men to join the migrant labour system in the least or permanently moved to the

towns in the most. Thus the policy was not aimed at giving the indigents equal access to resources and opportunities because the land continued to be taken and given to whites, sometimes as a punishment for recalcitrance or as a means to reward cooperative individual *mahosi*. Since black South Africans were accustomed to using land extensively the Natives Land Act dramatically curtailed their historical and traditional reliance upon the availability of exploitable resources of the land (Butler, Rotberg and Adam, 1977: 11).

It is worth noting that there is no obvious emphasis of commercial farming for black South Africans, and Vhavenda in particular, regardless of them having had a history of peasant cultivation and domestication of animals under the guardianship of their *mahosi*. It suffices to say that this meant that the trusteeship role and economic responsibilities that *mahosi* enjoyed from time immemorial had been supplanted by their being supervisors of the land on behalf of the powers that be (INLOGOV, 1993: 37). This means that whatever policy changes on the land that the white authorities had on the horizon, the indigenous communities and *mahosi* were not richly catered for. In this regard Butler, Rotberg and Adam (1977: 20) posit that the Land Act of 1913 effectively closed the market from Africans without at the same time increasing the size of the 'reserves' for occupation, cultivation and political activity.

These changes to settlement patterns and demographics had previously been informed by the report of the Lagden Commission of 1903-1905, which had recommended for the segregation of the South African society and thus subsequently limit the number of black South Africans residing on white commercial farms. Ironically this did not mean that black South Africans were increasingly expected to perform forced cheap migrant labour in the said farms (VG: Commission of Inquiry into Venda Vuhosi Affairs, 1989). In essence the Act undermined the indigenous conception of economic accrual of black South Africans which evolved around communalism as it restricted them to smaller areas of the land (Khangala, 1999: 1; 7; Jeannerat, 2004: 35-36; Halala, 2011: 199; Nyanda, *Sowetan Letters*, Wednesday Tuesday July 2018: 15).

According to Butler, Rotberg and Adam (1977: 20) the steady elimination of black South Africans from political roles held in common among whites without the

elaboration in new structures, and the concession of new powers to the African areas was a development analogous to the closing to Africans of the markets without at the same time the Land Act increasing the size of the 'reserves'. Much as the authority of *mahosi* was reduced after subjugation by the South African government and given to the Governor-General, the subjects no longer depended on *mahosi* for acquisition of land because their leaders did not have any land to distribute anymore; this altered the relationship between communities and *mahosi*, as it will be seen later. At the same time the traditional bond between *mahosi* and their subjects was weakened as a result of modernisation, *miseducation* and the 'detrribalised' Vhavenda who had moved to the urban areas (SA K20 E5/38(22), Socio-economic development of Native Areas Commission (Tomlinson Report), pp. 1101-1111: Record of Evidence, 1952.06.19 at Pietersburg; SA K20 3(18). A (Report): Record of Evidence, Sibasa Rehabilitation Committee, Pietersburg, 1952.06.17: 868-904; Liebenberg, in Muller, 1980: 491).

Equally important is that in 1936 the NP government of the Afrikaner nationalist leader and Prime Minister J.B.M Hertzog, who had replaced Jan Smuts' United Party as leader of the Union, legislated the Native Trust and Land Act (Act No. 18 of 1936) (elsewhere called the Black Trust and Land Act of 1936 (Nemudzivhaqi, 1985: 27; Bauer, 1992: 20). Together with the Natives Land Act of 1913, the Natives Trust and Land Act of 1936 designated more 'reserves' to be administered by *mahosi* on behalf of the white administration. It also laid the foundation for separate development of black South Africans as well as the basis for apartheid policies of respective post-1948 NP governments and the subsequent establishment of Bantu homelands or Bantustans (Davenport and Saunders, 2000: 308; Khunou, 2009: n.p.; Venter and Landsberg, 2011: 6). With the enactment of the Natives Land Act of 1913 and the demarcation of white commercial farms through which the land area for occupation by black South Africans had been reduced to seven percent (7%), and the excision and forced removals that followed, the Natives Trust and Land Act of 1936 increased the total land surface area of black South Africans to thirteen percent (13%) with eighty-seven percent (87%) richly left for urbanisation and white occupation (Hartman, Kriel, Boonzaaier, Els and Wassermann, 1993: 13; Khangala, 1999: 17).

Significantly the land area identified and designated for occupation by black South Africans, including Vhavenda under their respective *mahosi*, was set aside based on

historical occupation although most of it was generally stony and infertile (Bauer, 1992: 72). According to Davenport and Saunders (2000: 601) the Natives Trust and Land Act of 1936 reverted to the earlier policy of enlarging the 'reserves' with the help of government funds more suited to the requirements of land conservation than to the basic and historical needs of the rural African communities. Included in these developments were betterment schemes which forced the black farmers to fence, plough, cull and market under state supervision, and improvisations consequent upon the racial separation of land ownership, and for that reason distasteful to *mahosi* and their subjects who had not asked for such separation (NTS 7787 191/335. F1294. Chief Mpefu's (sic) complaint. "From memorandum of proceeding at Indaba held in 1905.10.18 at Louis Trichardt between Venda chiefs and Sir Lawley,,"; Nemudzivhadi, 1985: 26; Khangala, 1999: 14; Davenport and Saunders, 2000: 601).

Essentially the government was hell-bent on sticking to its objective of the political reasons for creating 'reserves' and remained focused on increasing the human carrying capacity because it wanted as many black South Africans as possible in the 'reserves' to keep the pool of cheap black labour sustainable for white commercial farms; while gradually creating a poverty stricken black populace that would be dependent on it for economic survival. The result was that *mahosi* were confronted by many problems as a result of the loss and demarcation of land as well as the introduction of new cultivation methods which were controlled and served the benefits of whites (TA GOV 1152 PS 50/37/08. Telegram to Governor of the Transvaal to Secretary of State, 1908.09.19. Powers of paramount chiefs; VG: Commission of Inquiry into Venda Vhuhosi Affairs). In addition the Act had reverted to the policy of 'reserves' so that it could assist in the recruitment of mine labour through the contribution of *mahosi* and thus modernise black South Africans socio-politically so that they could toe the line (Davenport, 2000: 638). The discussion below continues with the focus on the legislation that established the three-tier system of government and how it determined the relationship between *mahosi* and the South African government.

4.5.2 The establishment of the three-tier system of government: Diluting African value systems-based administration

The previous discussion attempted to show how the 'twin legislation' above affected African/ Vhavanḁa value systems-laden administration that had determined political authority and economic power as well as the social life of the rural communities under respective *mahosi*. This had a bearing on the land that historically belonged to and was held under trusteeship of *mahosi* on behalf of their subjects on a communal basis from time immemorial. It is the view of the current researcher that the legislation in question continued with the process of political and economic disempowerment of *mahosi*, leaving them confronted by many problems as a result of the loss of land and the introduction of new cultivation methods which were controlled and served the interests of whites (TA GOV 1152 PS 50/37/08. Telegram to Governor of the Transvaal to Secretary of State, 1908.09.19. Powers of paramount chiefs; VG: Commission of Inquiry into Venda Vhuhosi Affairs). Therefore, by the end of the discussion above the current researcher had attempted to show how land dispossession and the establishment of the 'reserves' had transformed *mahosi* into the subordinate servants of the white authorities initially under the auspices of the Governor-General, under the Prime Minister and the President of South Africa, in that order. It is for this reason that the following discussion focuses on the legislation that established the three-tier system of government which laid the foundation for self-government and later homeland 'independence'.

4.5.2.1 The Native Administration Act (Act No. 38 of 1927)

It is apparent from above that the South Africa Act of 1909, the Natives Land Act of 1913 and the Native Trust and Land Act of 1936 laid the basis for many cruel and racially inspired segregation laws. The enactment of the Native Administration Act (Act No. 38 of 1927), elsewhere referred to as the Black Administration Act of 1927 saw the African value systems of governance and administration irreversibly changed and the white government taking control of the administration of African communities throughout South Africa. In short the Act clearly states that it was crafted for the better control and management of Black Affairs (Statutes of the Republic of South Africa: Blacks, Black Administration Act No. 38 of 1927; Hartman, Kriel, Boonzaaier and Wassermann, 1993: 1; Khunou, 2009: n.p.). Therefore with the main objective thus

spelt out, it is clear that right from its inception the Act started a process that further compromised the status, powers and authority of *mahosi* and what *vhuhosi* and institutions meant to rural Vhavenda.

The Act also paved the way for subsequent legislation such as the Black Authorities Act (Act No. 68) of 1951 and the Black Self-Government Act (Act No. 46) of 1959, among others elsewhere referred to as the Bantu Authorities Act and Bantu Self-Government Act, respectively (VG, BAO K375, File no. 11/3/3(1): Minute, Matshangana Territorial Authority and between the Matshangana and the Bavenda of Louis Trichardt and Sibasa, 1963.11.12; Hartman, Kriel, Boonzaaier, Els and Wassermann, 1993: 19 and 20; Khangala, 1999: 28, 34, 38, 39 43). Accordingly the Native Administration Act and the Homeland Administration Acts (as will be seen below) turned *mahosi* into servants of the state instead of democratically accountable representatives of their people and *magota* into unelected royal family appointees (Ncapayi, 2017: 5). The historical facts about the relationship between *vhuhosi* and their subjects clearly show that the previous statement negates the essence of the same before the passing of these Acts. This can also be supported by what the Natives/ Black Administration Act stood for: "To provide for the better control and management of Black affairs." (Statutes of the Republic of South Africa (RSA) - Blacks: Black Administration Act No. 38 of 1927: 145). The question arising from this statement would be to whose benefit were black South Africans supposed to be managed and controlled. History shows that Vhavenda, and Africans in general, had been managing themselves comparably well according to their various African value systems without any need of interference by foreigners, which management bordered on "control management". Therefore it is evident that the crux of control and management by this Act did not stand to benefit Vhavenda and in fact violated the foundations of their existence: African value systems.

Included in the Native/ Black Administration Act was Section 2(7) through which *vhuhosi* was created for communities under a *gota* in line with the 'tribalisation' and/ or 'retribalisation' project of Vhavenda under *mahosi* within the "divide and rule" model of administration of communities. The 'tribalisation' and/ or 'retribalisation' legitimised in terms of Section 5(1) (a) of the Act through which the head of state, Governor-General and later the State President was empowered to create new 'tribes', divide

existing ones, and demarcate the area occupied by members of communities under *mahosi* (Hartman, Kriel, Boonzaaier, Els and Wassermann, 1993: 19; Khunou, 2009: n.p.). It is also evidence of interference of the worst kind by foreigners into the affairs of a people that had been enjoying existence as well as cultural, economic and socio-political intercourse with other “families and clans” within the borderless space (referred to by Bankie and Angula above) with so much dual respect for the value systems of the other and vice versa. Ironically according to Hartman, Kriel, Boonzaaier, Els and Wassermann (1993: 19) in terms of the Act the concept ‘tribe’ was never generically defined. The current researcher argues that this was because it was foreign and had no relevance to and was never premised on the essence of African value systems determined on communalism. It is no wonder the white authorities speedily accepted the existence of ‘tribe’ if a hereditary *vhuhosi* could be identified and created in terms of Section 2(7) and 2(8) of the Act, which talk to the powers of the Governor-General to appoint and recognise persons as ‘chiefs’ and ‘headmen’, respectively, (Statutes of the RSA, 1927: 146) because they chose to “ignore” the essence of value systems out of their own volition and “cowardice” in their haste to “control and manage” black South Africans, and thus destroy *vhuhosi*.

It is therefore illogical and hypocritical of these authors to claim that the powers that be accepted the existence of ‘tribe’. The concept was created by the authorities who imposed it on black South Africans, Vhavenda included, for their own hypocritically administrative and hegemonic objectives. Van Warmelo (1971: 356) avers that “in Venda on the other hand there were, despite appearances, no ‘tribes’, only territories and their owners, the rulers: the bond between the royal clan and its land. It was the people who were incidental. They moved from one chiefdom to another, usually after deaths in the family, quarrels, accusations of witchcraft, and other troubles. They had relatives in many places, under other rulers.” Based on the contentions by Du Plessis (1955), Van Warmelo (1971) and Van Warmelo in Hammond-Tooke (1974), the current researcher argues that the ‘tribalisation’ or ‘retribalisation’ project was part of the administrative policy of the white political monopoly to define black South Africans as ‘tribes’ under various *mahosi*. Similarly, they invoked these sections to “control and manage” black South Africans, regardless of their absence within African/ Vhavenda value systems of administration/ governance. Equally in “Venda, a land of independence: Venda History” (n.d.: n.p) it is similarly pointed out that:

The chiefs do not rule a specific tribe, only specific areas and the people who reside there, more over most of these Chiefs are cousins, as they stem from a common ancestor. For this reason, the designation 'Tribal Authority' is not correct and should rather have been local authorities.

Since Van Warmelo in Hammond-Tooke (1974: 80) points out that Venda history is about family and clan and that the names of rulers were not meant to distinguish 'tribes' but people who paid homage to a particular ruler, the use of the concept 'tribe' referring to black South Africans was a Eurocentric and myopic imposition such that the current researcher views the concept cultural group(s) as more befitting. Furthermore, the automatic acceptance of existence of 'tribe' by colonial/ apartheid creators was confirmation of "ignorance, arrogance and cowardice" inasmuch as 'tribe' never existed within Vhavenḁa value systems as it was a socio-political intrusion. Essentially when Aḁilali Mphephu defied white authorities around 1898 who then created *vuhosi* and 'tribes' for Sinthumule and Kutama they equally interfered with Vhavenḁa culture, customs and traditional practices, in the name of dealing with 'problematic' *mahosi* while replacing them by collaborative ones (SA GG 1191 50/1693. Minute 50/1693, dated 1942.10.13; SA URU 2353 1921 Acts of Misconduct, Folio 432). It is no surprise that the white authorities even claimed that 'tribe' was a syndicate of ten to fifteen families which buys land and elects a 'chief' or a 'petty chief' (Unterhalter, 1987: 150; See also *Compact Oxford English Dictionary*, 2013: 1106; *Oxford Afrikaans-English/English-Afrikaans Woordeboek*, 2017: 262 and 700) also absent from Tshivenda lexicon; further indication of its Eurocentric lexical refinement.

Resultantly, in most cases this factionalised the subjects according to loyalty, because *khosi* is not made but born and ascends the throne based on Vhavenḁa value systems and practices which determine customary law (Khangala, 1999: 8-9) (See also the dictum '*vuhosi vhu to u bebelwa*' mentioned earlier). In the same vein, Van Warmelo in Hammond-Tooke (1974: 80) asserts that it is an *idee fixe* with many Europeans that Vhavenḁa had a 'paramount chief' and that it was Mphephu, although neither has ever been the case. Aḁilali Mphephu and his predecessors had never been a 'paramount chief' but *thovhele* (king). As a reminder the current researcher has already explained the hierarchical concepts that define *vuhosi* and institutions previously; 'paramount chief' is not one of them. The house of ḁhohoyandou/

Ramabulana/ Makhado/ Mphephu has always been a kingship family and/or clan. In this regard the Premier of the Limpopo Province of South Africa, Stanley Mathabatha, remarks that “traditionally the system of traditional leadership works on succession and that the process of appointing a chief is known by traditional councils, not politicians or residents” (*Daily Sun*, Thursday 3 2019: 14).

Flowing from above in terms of Section 2(1)(a)(i) ‘tribal authorities’ were introduced, referring to those authorities which were established for communities designated as ‘tribes’, be they those which existed long before colonialism and apartheid, or even the ‘creation’ of *vhuhosi* within the areas of jurisdiction of *mahosi* through ‘tribalisation and/ or retribalisation’. Earlier the current researcher argued that the concept of ‘tribe’ was foreign to *vhuhosi* of Vhavenḁa and institutions inasmuch as *vhuhosi* had evolved from families or clans from time immemorial in original and/ or historical areas, either acquired through conquest or subjugation; a case in point being under the leadership of Ṱhohoyanḁou, Makhado, Mphephu, in that order. For this reason the effects of the Black Authorities Act follows below.

4.5.2.2 The Bantu/ Black Authorities Act of 1951: The establishment of apartheid administrative authorities within the homeland policy

The victory of the Afrikaner NP in 1948 ushered in a period of an apartheid policy-making project which focused on the political as well as the social segregation of various population groups with the total exclusion of black South Africans from equitable political participation; the outcome of which was the establishment of ethnic homelands (Meij, 1976: 130; “South Africa: A-Z”, 1982: 10; Butler, Rotberg and Adam, 1977: 2). According to these sources the NP government of South Africa was able to build upon a long and cumulative tradition of segregation in South African politics and decision-making by using a systematic programme intended to ‘tribalise’ and/ or ‘retribalise’ black South Africans and to eliminate a generally inclusive political participation. In the same vein during pre-colonial times Vhavenḁa, like any other African people, did not view themselves as ‘tribes’ but as families and clans as ironically mentioned by Van Warmelo in Hammond-Tooke (1974: 80). They interacted within a borderless socio-political and economic space by sharing cultures and in retraining letting cultures influence them (Bankie and Angula, 2000: 50); as cited in

Van Rensburg, 2013: 26). It is ironic that the colonial and/ or apartheid authorities claimed 'retribalisation' because the concept was not within African/ Vhavanḁa value systems. The belief in the 'retribalisation' project, sounds as if in truth Africans/ Vhavanḁa had lost 'tribal' identity throughout history, such that colonialism and/ or would help in the restoration thereof. The current researcher argues that the process was more of a 'tribalisation' of Vhavanḁa as a basis for *ethnic* politics of the homeland system than the restoration of 'tribes' or the 'retribalisation' process as claimed in the Acts of 1927 and 1951, respectively (Algemene Omsendbrief nr. 68 van 1965: 5).

Admittedly the white authorities designated Vhavanḁa into various 'tribes' by creating illegitimate *vhuhosi* to oversee communities they called 'tribes' in order to deepen *ethnic* 'nationalism' by developing ethnically-based institutions within the 'reserves', Bantustans or homelands for political expediency (Oomen, 2005: 2; Butler, Rotberg and Adam, 1977: 20; Khunou, 2009: n.p.; Venter and Lansberg, 2011: 5-6). This artificially institutionalised *ethnicity* morphed *mahosi* into co-opted servants of the colonial and/ or apartheid governments: a departure from the days of "families and clans" of Vhavanḁa value systems. Thus the 'tribalisation' project was tantamount to disrupting the united opposition to repressive, oppressive, racial and segregationist policy while destroying cultural interaction within this borderless space. It deprived *mahosi* of their autonomy, socio-political and economic independence, robbing them of their African *identity* premised on value systems of *vhuhosi* and African unity which might have prevailed over *ethnic* 'nationalism'. It is from this premise that the current researcher argues earlier in the study that Vhavanḁa were not a homogenous people, regardless of this claim by white authorities to use it as the basis to separate families and clans into various 'tribes' to fulfil the implementation of racist legislation. Equally, the Bantu Self-government Bill of 1959 dictated that "the Bantu peoples... do not constitute a homogenous people, but form separate national units on the basis of language and culture" (Carter, Karis and Stultz, 1967: 53).

Flowing from above the South Africa Act of 1909, Land Act of 1913, the Black Administration Act of 1927 as well as the Black Trust and Land Act of 1936, levelled the playing field for the enactment of the Black Authorities Act (Act No. 68 of 1951) and other successive legislation during the evolution of self-government and homeland 'independence' in South Africa. The Black Authorities Act of 1951 promulgated the

'tribal' systems of government, by so doing recognising and providing for further co-option of *mahosi* as instruments and propagators thereof (Bauer, 1992: 21; Butler, Rotberg and Adam, 1977: 23; Unterhalter, 1987: 153). Enclosed within this Act were the official recognition of 'tribal' councils as 'tribal authorities'; the establishment of elected community authorities in areas inhabited by communities as opposed to 'tribes'; the establishment of regional authorities for the areas of two or more local authorities; and the formation at the apex of the structure by the territorial authority in which various regional authorities were prescribed (Bauer, 1992: 21; Butler, Rotberg and Adam, 1977: 23). Therefore, as from 1951, the *vhuhosi* system of government, which had been seen as a challenge before, was recognised with a distinction drawn on the lowest level between 'tribal' and/or community authorities, regional authorities and territorial authorities.

Succinctly put the Black Authorities Act of 1951 negatively transformed customary structures of governance of *vhuhosi*, renamed them 'community authorities' in instances where there was no *khosi* in the past, a confirmation of the creation thereof in terms of the Act of 1951 (DPLG, 2000: 14. See also Butler, Rotberg and Adam, 1977: 23). Through this Act any *gotu* could lay claim to either 'royal descent' or a substantial number of followers, be recognised in a designated area of jurisdiction and claim the status of *vhuhosi*. Thus, it was possible for the powers that be to unilaterally recognise *magota* as *mahosi* during the creation of community authorities which later assumed the status of 'tribal' authorities; or even attain such a status before recognition of the 'headman' as a 'chief' (Hartman, Kriel, Boonzaaier, Els and Wassermann, 1993: 9). These authors (1993: 2) aver that 'tribal' authorities mean those authorities which were established for the different 'tribes' within the area of jurisdiction of the Legislative Assembly in terms of Section 2(1) (a) (i) of the Black Authorities Act of 1951 amended by Proclamation R. 96 of 1969 and for which 'chiefs' had been appointed in terms of Section 2(7) of the Act of 1927). Accordingly these legislation imposed the creation and appointment of certain *mahosi*, whereas for Vhavenda, Vatsonga/ Machangana and Bapedi/ Basotho-ba-Leboa, succession to *vhuhosi* is sanctified by customary law (Matshidze, 2011; Nemudzivhadi, 1977; Benso, 1979; Khangala, 1999).

As indicated earlier in the study, the old Vhavenda adage holds that “*vhuhosi vhu tou bebelwa*”, literally meaning that “*vhuhosi* is ascribed by birth” and thus taking the cue from the unwritten laws laid down throughout generations (Van Warmelo, 1971: 355, 356, 357). Referring to *vhuhosi* of Vhavenda Van Warmelo (1971: 356) further mentions that rulers born to rule feared the wrath of their ancestors should they neglect the heritage for which those ancestors had laboured, plotted and lost their blood. Contrarily white authorities flouted these Vhavenda value systems, by creating *vhuhosi* for their collaborative stooges and using legislation to impose them through the brutal and inhumane system (Shai, 2018: 268-269). These legislation disregarded the central essence of related maxims and customary laws. Kriel, Boonzaaier, Els and Wasserman (1993: 2) argue that the contents of Section 2(8) of the Black Administration Act of 1951 are actually an indictment of the culpability of the system in violating and denigrating Vhavenda and African value systems that determed culture, customs and tradition (See also Ncapayi, 2017: 5) because the authority and autonomy of *mahosi* never referred to ‘community’ and/ or ‘tribal authorities’, ‘regional authorities’ and ‘territorial authorities’.

Essentially, the administration of the areas occupied by Vhavenda communities revolved around communalism: under *vho-thovhele(la)* (kings), for example Thohoyandou, Ramabulana, Makhado and Mphephu with the assistance of *mahosimahulu* who administered a territory (*shango*) on behalf of *thovhele*, *mahosi* (*muvhundu/* district), *magota* (tshisi or zwisi/ sub-district(s)/ lands) and *vhakoma* (*muḍi* or *miḍi*/several villages) (Van Warmelo, The Venda ethnic group: The Venda, a distinct people in history, culture and language. Unpublished Government Report, Feb. 1975: 14-19; DPLG, 2000: 14; Van Warmelo, 1971; 360, 362, 363; Benso, 1979: 25; Shillington, 1985: 9). Therefore the introduction of ‘community’, ‘tribal’, ‘regional’ and ‘territorial’ authorities was detrimental to the essence of *vhuhosi* and institutions; the apex of which was occupied by *thovhele*. Lest we forget, with all its flaws and defects, in the past *vhuhosi* of Vhavenda and institutions, had proved itself for its resilience amidst external pressure, danger and threats because it represented no one’s stooge, although eventually the rigid framework that held *vhuhosi* body politic up was destroyed by these changes (Van Warmelo, 1975: 14, 15, 19, 20; Meij, 1976: 135).

The Act of 1951 changed this because through ‘community’ and/ or ‘tribal’ authorities, comparable to ‘rural municipalities’, regional and territorial authorities, legislative, executive and judicial responsibilities of *vuhosi* was limited, guided, ultimately controlled by white authorities and regarded as an equivalent of ‘rural parliaments’ (BAO 4990, file no. 56/8/8; Olivier, 1976: 92; Butler, Rotberg and Adam, 1977: 23; Bauer, 1992: 21; Khangala, 1999: 29). Butler, Rotberg and Adam (1977: 24) further posit that the Black Authorities Act of 1951 had little immediate impact on local African governance because *mahosi* were suspicious and the educated as well as politicised Africans were unequivocally hostile to the Act as they viewed it as a retrogressive, patronising legislation. This statement captures the essence of the attitude of *mahosi* regarding the Act as they held their own value systems in high regard, whether educated or not, they could identify the absence thereof in its application; hence foreign interference. Similarly, Lalendle (2003: 32) mentions that the road to self-government was laid by the Bantu Authorities Act of 1951, the provisions of which were to establish:

- (a) a tribal authority for each tribe, or a community authority for each community without a ‘chief’, herein referred to as a *khosi* in terms of Section 2(a);
- (b) a regional authority for any two or more areas for which tribal and community authorities had been established in terms of Section 2(b);
- (c) a territorial authority for any two or more areas with established regional authorities in terms of Section 2(c).

Unterhalter (1987: 152) maintains that the Act “placed the administration of certain aspects of the lives of rural Africans in the hands of Bantu Tribal, Regional and Territorial authorities to whom certain advisory, executive and administrative powers were to be gradually evolved.” What the author fails to mention is that the Act was an imposition to suit the powers that be as they viewed the value laden, historical and traditional African/ Vhavenda administrative systems as a barrier to their racial and segregationist ideal such that the three levels provided the with a solution to the problem. Van Warmelo (1975: 14, 15, 20) sums these changes by positing that “with all the danger wholly removed, under the white man’s law and police protection, and deprived of all important functions *vuhosi* and institutions is but an empty shell. Pre-European sovereign *vuhosi* exercised power, partly on its own as executive but

always in the general sense and advantage of the regime... It functioned from day to day, renewing itself, adapting itself, purging itself, a continual improvisation as it were. In the top inner circle one might find some exalted but mediocre types solely tolerated for their rank, but the more humble the origin of others, the more they were making a contribution in good judgement, courage, efficiency, knowledge, debate or just character"; these which were absent in the Act because it was a product of non-consultation and an imposition of political expediency.

The quotation above serves to capture the significance, supreme nature and resilience of *vhuhosi* which was then flowing against the tide of colonial and apartheid interference and political onslaught. Much as the Eurocentric hegemonic claim or argument might be that without European interference, African value systems of administration would not have evolved or seen the break of day, it was in essence evolving day in and day out, year in and year out, regardless of whatever its fault lines, might have been, and foreign threats to its basic tenets and value systems. Needless to say the following were imposed to serve as an establishment for a controllable and manageable administrative structure to the detriment of *vhuhosi* and institutions.

a) Community councils and/ or 'tribal' authorities

In essence the promulgation of the Black Authorities Act of 1951 made it possible for community councils to be created under an illegitimate *khosi*, renamed 'community authorities', as envisaged by the authorities, regardless of it being devoid of any history of hereditary *vhuhosi* (Government Gazette, 38, No. 13638 of 1991. Department of Development Aid, No. R. 2779, 22 November 1991. General Regulations for Tribal and Community Authorities, Schedule Definitions; DPLG, 2000: 17 and 23; DPLG, 2002: 36 and 38; Hartman, Kriel, Boonzaaier, Els and Wassermann, 1993: 9). In this regard Delius (*City Press: Voices*, 24 June, 2018: 1) asserts that in the apartheid era, the system of traditional leadership was comprehensively reconstructed by the imposition of the Bantu Authorities Act, which drew *mahosi* into a tight colonial embrace. This author further avers that in terms of the Act *mahosi* were recognised, and 'tribal' boundaries drawn with the intention to reward those who lent collaborative support to the system and to penalise those groups who resisted.

Following the above developments *mahosi* in varying degrees became elected officials of the government and not by the people, as per customary law. This new order expanded their power over land and lives of their subjects. It suffices to say that the Bantu Authorities Act 1951 had a degree of impact on local governance, even when some educated and politicised Africans were able to make certain *mahosi* suspicious and hostile to the Act inasmuch as they viewed it as retrogressive and patronising (Hartman, Kriel, Boonzaaier, Butler, Rotberg and Adam, 1977: 24). Nevertheless, these developments assisted in dividing the African opposition, the division of cultural groups which afforded the whites a platform to argue that as a combined group they were no more a minority, but larger than any other black South African *ethnic* group, with new institutions of self-government along exclusion from limited participation (Butler, Rotberg and Adam, 1977: 24).

Therefore, membership to the 'tribal' authorities was appointed by instructed local *mahosi* who had become salaried government officials and Bantu Commissioners who had the powers to veto the appointments. It is clear that the arrangements were highly Eurocentric and devoid of African value systems of administration as shown above or posited by Van Rensburg (2013: 49). The result was that *mahosi* and their communities had no leg to stand on since they could not feel free to lodge complaints against those placed in authority over them; this which bordered on paternalism, imposition and dictatorship (Van Warmelo, 1975: 37; Hartman, Kriel, Boonzaaier, Els and Wassermann, 1993: 17). In the main these changes affected the consensus that existed before and the statuses, powers and authority of the three *mahosi* whom other lesser *mahosi* had previously aligned themselves with to as satellites; who became tribal authorities in 1954. When Sinthumule, Kutama, Lwamondo, Nesengani and Rammbuda were promoted or elevated into *mahosi* this brought the total number of 'tribal' authorities to eight, while others were deemed 'independent headmen' (Nemudzivhadi, 1985: 28; Khangala, 1999: 37).

This 'tribalisation' project by then Minister of Bantu Affairs and architect of the system of '*baaskap*' apartheid, Hendrik Verwoerd (Omer-Cooper, 1987: 195) affected the statuses of three houses as 'tribal' authorities in terms of the Bantu/ Black Administration Act of 1951, under the chairmanship of Patrick Mphephu. Patrick Mphephu's appointment was not necessarily based on ability. But as a hereditary ruler

he was deemed to descend from the historically most senior house among Vhavenda (SA NTS 8940 177/362(1): Minute 177/362(2) on the Establishment of Mphaphu Tribal Authority from the Department of Native Affairs, Pretoria to Chief Native Affairs Commissioner at Pietersburg; Van Warmelo, 1975: 37-46; Van Warmelo, 1971: 355; Nemudzivhaqi, 1985: 28). These 'tribal' authorities were assisted by *magota* and councillors allegedly 'appointed' by members of their communities. It is worth noting that the apartheid powers also coined the title 'independent headman' to reduce the number and influence of the three most powerful *mahosi* on the one hand and reward 'independent headmen' who collaborated with them during the 'tribalisation' project by removing them from under the three main *mahosi* on the other. Needless to say Vhavenda value systems have (had) no accommodation of an 'independent headman'. A 'headman' is an equivalent of a *gota* who is never 'independent' but part of the administrative hierarchy of *thovhele* just below a *khosi*; hence further violation and/ or assault on Vhavenda pre-colonial hierarchy (Van Warmelo, 1975: 19-20).

Be that as it may Verwoerd later felt that the number of *mahosi* of Vhavenda *vis-à-vis* 'tribal' authorities weakened the administrative capacity needed over various 'tribal' authorities (Khangala, 1999: 34). As Minister of Native Affairs, in 1958 Verwoerd invoked the Natives Administration Act of 1927 to elevate or promote more 'independent headmen' into positions of *vuhosi*, and thus increase the number of *mahosi* required to fulfil the objective(s) expected. These new *mahosi* were Madzivhandila of Tshakhuma, Piet Booie of Ramovha, a former *gota* of Mulezhe under Mphaphuli, where Nandoni Dam is located, Makuya of Ha-Makuya under Mphaphuli, Tshikonelo of Ha-Tshikonelo under Mphaphuli, and other *magota* under Davhana/ Nesengani. During installation they received appointment certificates and brief-cases, where after communities called them "*mahosi a bege*", literally meaning 'chiefs' appointed from brief-cases, eventually bringing 'tribal' authorities constituted under *mahosi* by 1975 to approximately twenty-five (25) (N1/1/5/15, Naturêlle Kommissaris, Sibasa, November 1958; Van Warmelo, 1975: 37-46; U. 12/2/5/27 of August 1979; Republic of Venda Verbatim Report (Hansard) of the fourth session of the second National Assembly, 1987: 239; Phophi, 1991; VG 2(1) 266 and 392: Commission of Inquiry into Venda Vuhosi Affairs; Breytenbach, 1975: 70; Khangala, 1999: 35). As alluded to by Khangala (1999: 35) in the previous chapter(s) the elevation of these individuals, right from Kutama and Sinthumule, and others through the creation of

'tribal' authorities was in conflict with Vhavenda customs and traditions of aristocracy. The elevation process in 1958 was not met with any resistance from historical *mahosi* for fear of losing out on their positions and the comfort as well as the perks that went with it (Khangala, 1999: 36). Looking at the progression of apartheid laws under Verwoerd's watch, it is no wonder that Omer-Cooper (1987: 195) refers to him as the most outstanding theoretician of the policy and the most convinced believer in its racist principles.

Generally, the Bantu/ Black Administration Act of 1951 initially aimed at promoting and recognizing *magota* of 'royal descent' (for example Sinthumule and Kutama), and even recognised their area of jurisdiction as 'tribal' authorities. The rules pertaining to genealogical seniority were neither here nor there as long as the primary objective worked in the favour of the powers that be, since the Governor-General had the powers to appoint and dismiss and/ or depose those who fell out of his favour (SA K.20 3(46), pp. 512-516: Verslag van die Kommittee vir die Sosio-ekonomiese Ontwikkeling van Bantoegebiede binne die Unie van Suid Afrika (Tomlinson Report); VG 2(1), pp. 281, 402, 419: Commission of Inquiry into Venda Vhuhosi Affairs; Hartman, Kriel, Boonzaaier, Els and Wassermann, 1993: 9). In line with the objectives of the segregation policy the three main *mahosi* were appointed as chairpersons of respective 'tribal' authorities above *magota* and councillors, the appointment which was not based on their ability but on their status, whether created or not, as confirmed and approved by the authorities in Pretoria (Khangala (1999: 34; See also SA NTS 8940 177/362(1): Minute 177/362(2) on the Establishment of Mphephu Tribal Authority from Department of Native Affairs, Pretoria, to the Chief native Affairs Commissioner at Pietersburg).

In essence this further violated Vhavenda customary law of succession and went against their cultural value systems, and constituted what Van Warmelo (1975: 19) called "the destruction of the rigid body politic", because the main *mahosi* had lost their independence and were being swayed by the objectives of racial and *ethnic* segregation. For example, soon after 'independence' in 1979 the State President of the Republic of Venda Patrick Mphephu created three more *vuhosi*, thereby abolishing what was then referred to as the Gwamasenga Community Authority, which had been established by Government notice No. 1462 dated 22 September 1967.

Vhuhosi of Muila of Ha-Muila, Netsianḡa of Tsiandḡa and Mugivhi of Ha-Mutsha increased the total number of *mahosi* to twenty-eight (28) from twenty-five(25), in terms of section 68, subsection (1) of the Constitution Act (Act 9 of 1979) (Report on the activities of the Department of National Assembly and Traditional Authorities for the calendar year 1981: 8; State President Minute No. 46/1979, 10/10/1979; Republic of Venda Verbatim Report (Hansard) of the fourth session of the second National Assembly, 1987: 239; Nemudzivhadi, 1985: 30; VG 2(1) 266 and 392: Commission of Inquiry into Venda Vhuhosi Affairs; “Venda History, A land of independence, a land of culture: Venda History, n.d.: n.p.; Khangala, 1999: 38). Thus the responsibility to create *vuhosi* had been passed on to Patrick Mphephu as part of the devolution of responsibilities by the white authorities to the leaders of the homeland; which *mahosi* were supposed to serve as members of the homeland parliament, in line with the Westminster system; thus this had no pre-colonial relevance to *vuhosi* of Vhavendḡa, its institutions and value systems (Breytenbach, 1975: 72; Benso, 1979: 41).

b) Regional authorities

Regional authorities which were established in terms of the Black Administration Act of 1951 covered two or more ‘tribal’ authorities and consisted of the members of those ‘tribal’ authorities, subordinate authorities, grouped together. Their functions were to establish and run schools, build and maintain public works, hospitals and roads, improve farming, agricultural, and silvicultural³⁸ methods, make by-laws as long as they were in line with the laws approved by white authorities, levy taxes and impose fines (SA K20 3(46), Tomlinson Report, pp. 512-516: Volume 1, Preface, The General Version; E 5/38 Tomlinson Report, pp. 868-904A, Sibasa Rehabilitation Committee, Pietersburg, 1952.06.17; Tomlinson Report: SA K20, Vol. 1-5, part 1 B1.37 and SA K20 E 5/38. Socio-economic Development of Native Areas Commission. Evidence (11-12), (18) Sibasa Rehabilitation Committee, 1952.06.17, Pietersburg, pp. 868-904A; Hartman, Kriel, Boonzaaier, Els and Wassermann, 1993: 23-24; Butler, Rotberg and Adam, 1977: 23). Initially, three regional authorities were constituted in 1959, these being Vhembe, later renamed Sibasa, Groot Spelonken (which included *mahosi*

³⁸ Silvicultural methods refer to agricultural practices that deal(t) with the growing and the cultivation of trees. Silviculture is the growing and cultivation of trees; hence silvicultural is an adjective (Compact Oxford English Dictionary, 2013: 964).

of Bapedi around the Soekmekaar area) and Dzanani, later renamed Ramabulana regional authority. However, in 1978 these were increased to four with the division of Sibasa into two, such that the regional bodies were Sibasa, Vuwani, Dzanani/Ramabulana and Mutale (Thoho-ya-ndou Territorial Authority, Sibasa, Minutes of Third Sitting, 12-16th October 1964; Van Warmelo, 1975: 37-46; Breytenbach, 1975: 71; Benso, 1979: 44; Nemudzivhaqi, 1985: 28).

c) Territorial authorities

The inauguration of the territorial authorities in 1962 constituted the representatives of community, 'tribal' and regional authorities, in that order. The regional authorities were joined to form larger groups to lay the foundation for later grouping into a body with overall authority: territorial authorities. The territorial authority in Venda, was initially called Vhembe but was renamed the Thohoyandou Territorial Authority (TTA) and could be seen as the first step towards the development of self-government status, and eventually an 'independent' homeland wherein Patrick Mphedu was appointed chairperson of the newly inaugurated TTA (Thoho-ya-ndou Territorial Authority, Sibasa, Minutes of Third Sitting, 12-16th October 1964; Hartman, Kriel, Boonzaaier, Els and Wassermann, 1993: 22; Bauer, 1992: 22; Riekert, 1975: 134-5; Nemudzivhaqi, 1985: 28).

A territorial authority was defined by the Promotion of Bantu Self-Government Act of 1959, and supervised the regional authorities, taking over their powers and methods of obtaining revenue, but always to the extent permitted by and with the explicit approval of the Governor-General (later the State President), as advised by the cabinet of the Republic of South Africa (Report on the activities of the Department of National Assembly of 1981: 8; Butler, Rotberg and Adam, 1977: 23; Bauer, 1992: 21-22). Although the language of self-government was being touted, *mahosi* and the councils that had been created to carry that 'sense of responsibility', remained on the leash because the government was determined to see them always stand under the guardianship and domination of the white man in South Africa; hence the talk of greater powers was just a pipe dream and impracticable. In addition it is clear that the white authorities did not completely trust *mahosi*; which is why they wanted to do everything

in their power to 'safeguard white rule' over the whole of South Africa and maintain white supremacy or *baaskap* (Geldenhuys, 1981: 4, 5, 6).

In short therefore the policy was an imposition as it had been unilaterally devised by the white minority on the majority black South Africans. Secondly, it is clear that the policy was a denial of black South Africans of their political and civil rights for narrow political 'white supremacist ideology'. In the third place the policy was premised on land grab and demarcation of the same for white commercial farms, an implication of political and economic disempowerment of *mahosi* and their communities because only 13 % (thirteen percent) of the land had remained in the hands of black South Africans, Vhavenda in particular; a violation of the value systems. Lastly, the very small land available was overpopulated, overgrazed, and infertile, poorly resourced and generally underdeveloped as this mainly served as reservoirs of cheap labour for the white commercial farms. Therefore, and conclusively, *mahosi* were used by the colonial authorities to rule over their communities and later to see the apartheid homeland policy to its successful implementation. In surmise this shows that in the words of Bekker (1993: 200) *mahosi* continued to act as manipulated agents to do the bidding on behalf of the propagators of the policy of separate development, while sliding Vhavenda into the playground of victimhood (Bekker, 1993: 200).

4.5.2.3 The Promotion of Bantu Self-government Act (Act No. 46 of 1959): The Road to homeland self-government

It essential to remain focused to the fact that the Enactment of these legislation, especially the Black Authorities Act of 1951, the Promotion of Bantu Self-government Act (Act No. 46 of 1959) and others that followed, emanated from what Venter and Landsberg (2011: 6) aver that Verwoerd viewed as the perfect way to deal with the so-called "black problem". To him the demographic distribution of black South Africans in the country, who were in the majority, mitigated against the Eurocentric, hegemonic, segregationist and racist approach to the political climate. Hence he was hell-bent on using *mahosi* to realise his dream of creating a white "super race" by separating black South African communities and removing them from the propinquity of white areas. In the same vein Lalendle (2003: 32) cites Worden (1994: 32) who refers to the same scenario as the "Bantu strategy" which was designed to exploit the

government approved *mahosi* and the local elite in the 'reserves' who were equipped with 'limited' administrative powers, based on a segregationist model of separate development. In this regard Posel (1991: 235) posits that the government's principal purpose in promulgating the Promotion of Bantu Self-government Act of 1959 was to address the problem of African political rights by defining the urban townships as outposts of *ethnic* homelands.

In essence the Promotion of Bantu Self-Government Act of 1959 was an elaboration of the Bantu Authorities Act of 1951 and became the legal cornerstone of subsequent homeland developments. Its preamble asserted that black South Africans formed diverse national units distinguishable by language and culture; who could not be considered in any sense homogenous (BAO F56/8/6; South Africa: A-Z, 1982: 59; Khunou, 2009: n.p.). This was a clear departure from previous claims by authors like Van Wamelo (1935), Phophi (1935) and Breytenbach (1975) Mathivha (1985), to mention a few. The Act stipulated that the provision should be made for the gradual extension of self-government to the national units; that the units should control land; that they should possess a number of executive and legislative prerogatives; thus designating eight units on linguistic and cultural rather than territorial grounds, with the Commissioners-General as the representatives of the central government designated to furnish guidance and advice and enlighten the population (BAO F56/8/6; Butler, Rotberg and Adam, 1977: 23-25).

Lalendle (2003: 33) contends that after the establishment of the community and/ or 'tribal', regional and territorial authorities, the Promotion of Bantu Self-government of Act of 1959 was in essence the second phase of the development of the homeland system. The author further avers that the Act set up eight (later ten) distinct Bantu homelands of the existing 'reserves', each with a degree of self-government, greatly extended the powers of co-opted *mahosi* and established homelands; Vhavenda homeland being the one relevant to this study (Lalendle, 2003: 33, cited from Worden, 1994: 110-111; see also Butler, Rotberg and Adam, 1977: 25; Posel, 1991: 234). This was in contrast to the pre-colonial period of time immemorial where African/Vhavenda value systems had provided *mahosi* with generous administrative leverage and powers, which white monopolistic powers saw as a "black threat" such that it needed a "Bantu strategy". With this strategy Verwoerd used, abused and misused historical

circumstances to divide black South Africans along *ethnic* lines. To Verwoerd the development of Bantu homelands towards granting to them homeland 'independence' was appropriate because history had divided them up long ago (Heroldt and Dombo, 1992: 72). Through this strategy even white political power was being tightened in the urban areas such that black South Africans were supposed to belong to and be resettled in the 'retribalised' homelands, to solve a "black problem" that needed a "Bantu strategy", ironically in "their own country by roping in the *vuhosi* system, recreating and recognising more *mahosi*", abusing and misrepresenting it by exploiting *mahosi*, while deposing or demoting legitimate ones (Bauer, 1993: 21; Lalendle, 2003: 35).

During the same year Michiel Daniël Christiaan De Wet Nel became the Commissioner-General of the TTA and was stationed at Sibasa, then the headquarters of the administration (Venda Territorial Authority: Minutes of the First Session, 6-9 October, 1969: 5). At the time De Wet Nel pointed out that "the 'educatedness' of man had been conferred upon him and that it can be measured by the experience the man possesses in a particular work, a man with good character and who looks optimistically to the future of his people" (BAO 56/8/4/3: Chiefs as heads of departments, Part 1). It is clear from this quotation that De Wet Nel and his ilk were hell-bent on their use and abuse of *mahosi* regardless of the latter's ignorance of the goings-on around them, save to say that they had been roped into the new glitters and corridors of power foreign to their long held traditions, customs and cultures. De Wet Nel assumed wide-ranging powers which included arranging territorial meetings and vetoing decision that might have been taken in those meetings but which were seen to be in conflict with the overall homeland policy; thus he served as the ears and eyes of the government in Pretoria (Venda Territorial Authority: Minutes of the First Session, 6-9 October, 1969: 5; SA URU 4495 233/263, p. 108. Minutes 233-263, file 56/8/2, dated 1963.02.20. Approved by Prime Minister H.F. Verwoerd: Aanwysing van Kaptein P.R. Mphephu as voorsitter van die Thohoyandou Gebiedsowerheid, Noordelike Gebied; Proclamation R 64; Nemudzivhaqi, 1985: 28-29; Breytenbach, 1981: 71). According to Benso (1979: 41) and Breytenbach (1975: 71) in 1962 Vhavenda were recognised as constituting a separate people with 'inalienable' rights to self-government to determine their own future.

Ridiculously, this separateness and inalienability was underscored by the fact that the same territorial authority included Vastonga/ Machangana- and Bapedi-speaking people, hence the vice-chairperson of the said authority was 'headman' Vincent Manthata, a Mopedi-speaking person. Secondly, the claim of the right to determine their own future is/ was an insult since this was being dictated to by the 1959 legislation enacted by the powers that be; and controlled how *vhuhosi* had to function. Thirdly, the powers accorded to the Commissioner-General meant that he was the one to decide about their future in line with the relevant legislation, as the ears and eyes of the government, because the territorial authority was exclusively established as an advisory and consultative body for the central government; hence the hawk-eyed presence of the Commissioner-General on the entity. Therefore, at this stage the administrative machinery of *vhuhosi* of Vhavenda had been subsumed into the apartheid policy such that although still extant it had been completely 'captured' to glorify the segregation policy based on ethnic groups.

The TTA was then granted the status of self-government in 1969 within which a homeland council was established with Patrick Mphephu as the Chief Councillor in terms of Proclamation R168 of June 1969, 'granted' executive or decision-making powers to control its own affairs to a far greater extent (SPP, 1983: 18; Benso, 1979: 42). While Khangala (1999: 45) says that the authority was granted limited legislative executive powers, SPP (1983: 18) mentions that the powers were greater. The current researcher posits that the powers granted were not greater as they were limited as compared to the pre-colonial era where *mahosi* could run their own affairs without any hindrance or veto from the Commissioner-General. Lest we forget the executive powers in question were dictated to by the constitution of the apartheid policy of the Republic of South Africa: the benefit of these powers were repaid by loyalty to Pretoria.

Mahosi who were selected to man the council were Patrick Mphephu, responsible for Department of Authority Affairs and Finance; T.T. Netshimbupfe, Department of Community Affairs; J.R. Rammuda, Department of Works; A.M. Madzivhandila, Department of Agriculture; Councillor I. Mudau for Department of Education and Culture (Venda Territorial Authority, 6-9 October, 1969: 5; Benso, 1979: 42; Nemudzivhadi, 1985: 29; Anon, 1984: 68; Meij, 1976: 125). As one among various *mahosi* who had been strategically and gradually 'harangued' into the homeland

system Patrick Mphedu was blindly attracted to the new arrangement as he saw it as an opportunity to restore Ramabulana's lost dynasty and glory. He and other *mahosi* could be forgiven for feeling this way because their level of education blinded them to the true nature of these political developments. According to Khangala (1999: 28), who also cites Rodgers (1976: 47) and Venter (1976: 188), Patrick Mphedu believed that his acceptance and support of this deceptive Nationalist government's dispensation would help restore and preserve *vhuhosi* of his forefathers. This is a stark reminder of how the mind of *mahosi* of Vhavenda worked at the time such that they were oblivious of what they were involved in to believe that their pre-colonial status and prestige would be restored (SA K20 3(22), Tomlinson Commission, pp. 1101-1111. Record of evidence, Pietersburg, 1952.06.19; SA K20 109(16), Tomlinson Commission, 1954: 512-516).

It is ironic that Butler, Rotberg and Adam (1977: 23-25) claim that the creation of authorities had proved a piecemeal, comparatively uncoordinated and still tentative process. However, following closely at the heels of the Promotion of Self-government Act of 1959, the TTA, renamed the Venda Territorial Authority (VTA) in 1969 was the granting of self-rule. This shows a systematic process in the implementation of the clauses of these Acts. One W.A. van der Merwe, Assistant Chief Bantu Affairs Commissioner advanced that the members of the TTA/ VTA were not necessarily to be educated as they had experience to head the same departments (BAO 56/8/4/3: Chiefs as heads of departments; BAO 56/8/4/2 Part 11 File R206/2/6, Motion 13: Sittings of the TTA), further indictment of the abuse of *vhuhosi*. It is also worth noting that the membership to the TTA/ VTA was more attractive to *mahosi* who were elected to the body because it went with the perks, such that this was also an advantage to the central government to continue with its policy of segregation. These included entertainment, remuneration/ salaries, allowances, bonuses, presents and refreshments such that although initially hoping to restore the lost glory and powers, *mahosi* and *magota*, especially Patrick Mphedu, lost focus of the primary objective of their involvement in the first place (Proclamation by the State President of the Republic of South Africa: Venda Territorial Authority and Regional Authorities: Salaries and Allowances; Venda Territorial Authority, Estimates of the Expenditure: Treasury of the Venda Territorial Authority, Financial Year Ending 31st March 1972: 2, 4 and 5). To sum this up Oomen (2005: 4) asserts that "traditional leaders played a central role

as bureaucratised representatives of forcibly created 'tribes', enjoying more legitimacy within the state than with the people they claimed to represent."

Through this process a governing council was elected into office in terms of Government Notice R167 of June 1969. Patrick Mphephu, Chairman of the authority, was once more appointed/ elected and confirmed as the Chief Councillor of the VTA. His councillors were *Khosi* A.M. Madzivhandila, *Gota* F.N. Ravele, *Khosi* T. Netshimbupfe, *Khosi* J.R. Rammbuḁa and Mr Mudau (BAO F56/8/6; Venda Territorial Authority, 6-9 October: 1; Nemudzivhaḁi, 1985: 29; Heroldt and Dombo, 1992: 73). Including Patrick Mphephu as the Chief-Councillor, the VTA had 26 (twenty-six) 'elected' members, from both created and original *mahosi*. One J.S.J. Pieterse was appointed Chief Director of the VTA. Furthermore, the highest authority and minister of the VTA was a Mr M.C. Botha who was a Minister of Bantu Administration and Development, further indicative of the hollowness of the claimed greater powers bestowed on *mahosi* alluded to above (BAO 56/8/6; Venda Territorial Authority, 6-9 October: 1; Meij, 1976: 126).

The current researcher would like to argue that although the process might have been piecemeal it was not uncoordinated as claimed above because it was implemented according to the gradual enactment of various legislation by the apartheid authorities and continued even after the death of Verwoerd, with the full knowledge of its outcomes for the political future of various *mahosi* and their subjects. To claim that such was uncoordinated is an understatement of the worst degree and borders on ignorance, arrogance, insult, bias and protectionism. It was imperative for the apartheid regime to keep its eye on the ball inasmuch as it wanted to terminate the representation of black South Africans elected in parliament and round off the policy of eliminating their majority and influence in white/ urban areas. Essentially in the main the pivotal standing of apartheid was to block black South African's to the urban areas by establishing homelands analogous to the British of protectorates of Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland (Lalendle, 2003: 33). However, the apartheid administration ended with egg in the face because homelands were never recognised internationally, save to say that they helped with achieving the goals of white minority rule which were steeped in racial segregation.

A step towards self-government was taken with the establishment of the Legislative Assembly in terms of Chapter 1 of the Bantu Homelands Constitution Act (Act No. 21 of 1971) (Butler, Rotberg and Adam, 1977: 28; Lalendle, 2003: 35); elsewhere referred to as the Black States Constitution Act (Act No. 21 of 1971), which was based on the same constitution of the TTA (Heroldt and Dombo, 1992: 74; Benso, 1979: 43; Republic of Venda Constitution Act (Act No. 9 of 1979)). The Bantu Homelands Constitution Act of 1971, another imposition on *vhuhosi* and institutions, established a six-man cabinet presided over by a 'Chief Minister' and a legislative assembly of *mahosi* who were government appointees, an executive and judicial authority, an own flag, national anthem and a High Court, something that was inimical of Vhavanḁa value systems (Report on the activities of the Department of National Assembly and Traditional Authorities, 1981; Nemudzivhaḁi, 1985: 29; Butler, Rotberg and Adam (1977: 28; Bauer, 1992: 22-23; Heroldt and Dombo, 1992: 73). Heroldt and Dombo (1992: 70) further contend that the 'chief minister', was a *khosi* by nature because in the Venda political system he was the highest legislative figure. The immediate assertion by Heroldt and Dombo in the last statement would ring true if it were referring to the original structure and hierarchy of *vhuhosi* and institutions of Vhavanḁa before it was interfered with and contaminated by colonialism and apartheid.

Although being inherently a *khosi*, as a designated 'chief minister' Patrick Mphephu was a government appointee and employee who had lost the sacrosanct status, respect, dignity and decorum that *vhuhosi* stood for. This further shows how disoriented and distorted the whole *vhuhosi* institution had become as a result of foreign interference. The bedrock of Vhavanḁa culture, traditional and politics (Heroldt and Dombo, 1992; 71; Khunou, 2009: n.p.) had become a subject of the white government's political expediency. In the same vein, the claim that the powers of *mahosi* had been restored throughout the apartheid project was ridiculous, biased and a fallacy as long as the apex position thereof, *thovhele*, continued to be unachievable, undermined and made to be cloaked behind the hypocritical title of 'paramount chief'. Heroldt and Dombo (1992: 74) further contend that as the main sources of leadership, authority, legitimacy and identity *vhuhosi* institutions are/ were crucial to the success of the newly created institutions which are based on clearly defined legal constitutions and codes of conduct in all spheres. The current researcher argues that the influence of the period of the homelands is either evident in Heroldt and Dombo, or Dombo

himself who is a Muvenda was being influenced by the proximity to Heroldt to be under his/ her spell so as to lose the essence of the centrality values of being a Muvenda. It is with this critique in mind that the current researcher concludes that Heroldt and Dombo seem to glorify the policy and what it stood for while ignoring the irreversible damage such constitutions had inflicted on *vhuhosi* and institutions Vhavenda. Secondly the success of the same 'clearly defined constitutions' stood to benefit the policy of grand apartheid of Verwoerd and had nothing to do with the status of *vhuhosi* and institutions as well as the success of Vhavenda value systems that determined what *vhuhosi* in its true nature in pre-colonial times stood for. It is in the same vein the State President of South Africa still had the powers to declare such a territory a self-governing state and later an 'independent' homeland within the Republic (Heroldt and Dombo, 1992: 75).

Butler, Rotberg and Adam (1977: 3-4) aver that in designating these territories as homelands, homogeneity of societies had not been consistently sought because the South African government relied on tradition, propinquity, 'practicality' and political expediency. The ignorance of the absence of homogeneity goes a long way to vindicate the current researcher's stance in this regard. This further shows that the Westminster system of government had been unilaterally imposed on Vhavenda as well as *vhuhosi* and institutions to promote the segregation policy. Butler, Rotberg and Adam (1977: 3-4) further agree that much of the history of twentieth century South Africa has been one of the imposition of constraints on black South Africans instead of opening opportunities. The current researcher again posits that the imposition of these constraints stifled potential political and economic opportunities embedded within the value systems of *vhuhosi* and institutions. In essence the homeland system ushered in a new *vhuhosi* system that went hand in hand with patronage, corruption, nepotism and dictatorship which was inimical of pre-colonial *vhuhosi* and institutions. Equally the Bantu Homelands Constitution Act of 1971, 'allowed' the homeland to legislate on matters but they could not amend or repeal the Constitution unless the State President of the Republic of South Africa assented to such legislation, (Venda Verbatim Report, 1973: 10; "South Africa, Time is running out, 1981: 153-154"; Meij, 1976: 125; Butler, Rotberg and Adam, 1977: 29); another proof of a referee and player strategy of the apartheid government.

Flowing from above, the claim of 'self-government' was also a sham because the six departments mentioned above were run by white officials seconded from Pretoria (the administrative capital of the RSA). Although he was the leader of his group, Patrick Mphephu himself had no unqualified powers because the responsibility lay with the Commissioner-General and various magistrates who oversaw policy in the homeland (Khangala, 1999: 45). In the same vein Heroldt and Dombo (1992: 75) cement Khangala's contention that during the stage of self-government the South African government remained in charge of security, economic policy and foreign relations, except local affairs which were essentially rural in nature, and could veto all the decisions taken by the Venda government (Venda Verbatim Report, 1973: 10; "South Africa: Time is Running out", 1981: 153-4). This is further confirmation that the claim by SSP (1983: 18), Breytenbach (1981: 71), Benso (1979: 42-43) and Khangala (1999: 45), for example, about the VTA assuming greater powers in the homeland were hypocritical and a sham. This also confirms the belief by *mahosi* that the homeland system would enhance the restoration of their long-lost pre-colonial status, power and authority, was neither here nor there. *Mahosi* continued to promote the Verwoerdian ideal of 'white supremacy' while assisting in the 'tribalisation', ethnicisation and balkanisation project of Vhavent̩da in a South African homeland.

The pre-colonial autonomy of *mahosi* reminisced by Van Warmelo (1975: 14, 15, 20) who regardless of their fault-lines were accepted by their subjects within their own space to refine and right their wrongs for the better was long lost. In surmise the claim by Heroldt and Dombo (1992: 75) that the granting of self-government to Vhavent̩da marked the beginning of things to come "in their social, economic as well as political life" and that "it ushered in more power to the people of Venda" is far from the truth, grand-standing and academic logic. Given this political scenario the claim that in terms of the Bantu Homelands Constitution Act of 1971 (Proclamation R. 12 of 1973), on 1 February 1973 Venda became a self-governing state (SSP, 1983: 18; Benso, 1979: 43; South Africa, 1985: 207; Heroldt and Dombo, 1992: 75; Khangala, 1999: 57) is an empty statement because the apartheid machinery still had its tentacles deeply sunk within the system of *vhuhosi* and institutions of Vhavent̩da, inasmuch as its basic values had been irredeemably destroyed. All what *mahosi* had wished for was not to be, the road to self-government and homeland 'independence' damnation was

irreversible; devoid of the restoration of the long-lost status; atonomy, power, authority, dignity, respect and legitimacy.

The pre-colonial *vhuhosi* was synonymous with the practice of receiving tributes from the subjects. Although this practice continued under self-government, a new dimension was added to be in line with the 'modern' system of government sanctioned by the apartheid homeland policy. As such a tax system was imposed on each Muvenda male who was an inhabitant of the established TTA/ VTA and who was deemed liable to pay tax, called Venda Tax, for the collection of funds for educational, or any other, purposes as may be determined from time to time (Republic of Venda: Report on the national Assembly for 1988 exclusive for the information of members, 1988: 4; Republic of Venda, Constitution Act (Act 1979): 38). This responsibility of tax collection imposed on *mahosi* had been challenged in the past by Makhado, and later Aļilali Mphephu leading to the Mphephu-Boer War. However, by this time *vhuhosi* had been wholly embedded in the new systems of glitz, glamour, materialism and intrigue of homeland politics.

4.6. The Road to 'Homeland Independence': The Elections of 1973 and 1978

The year 1973 saw a step further in the journey from self-government to homeland 'independence' and serves as another indictment of the entanglement of *vhuhosi* and institutions in the apartheid homeland policy. In terms of the Black States Constitution Act, (Act No. 21 of 1971) (Heroldt and Dombo, 1992: 75) the VTA morphed into the Venda National Assembly consisting of Patrick Mphephu as chairman and his five ministers, twenty-five of *mahosi* and two 'independent' *magota*. The indendent *magota* were Mugivhi and Netsianda from the Gwamasenga Community Authority, appointed by Patrick Mphephu in terms of the Black Authorities Act of 1951. In addition we fifteen members of the assembly appointed by *mahosi* and eighteen more members who were allegedly "elected by popular vote", bringing the total number of the members of the assembly to 60 (sixty) (Breytenbach, 1975: 72; Meij, 1976: 126; Benso, 1979: 43; SSP vol. 5, 1983: 18; Heroldt and Dombo, 1992: 75; Khangala, 1999: 58). It should be remembered that earlier in the chapter the current researcher indicated that the two 'independent' *magota* mentioned above, together with one Muila, were later 'inducted'

into the “homeland hall of infamy” as *mahosi* when Mphephu created *vhuhosi* for them. This Black Authorities Act together with the Bantu Homelands Citizenship Act (Act 26 of 1970), decreed every “African a citizen of one of the Bantustans, whether or not he or she lived in a Bantustan” (Unterhalter, 1987: 154) thereby depriving them of original domicile in the RSA. Thus these sister legislation further ‘incriminated’ *mahosi* of Vhavenda in a web of selling out the souls of their various communities to the ‘devil’, the homeland system, thereby robbing them of their valued South African nationalism (Lipton, 1986: 53).

If the paragraphs above attempted to expose the indiscriminate entanglement of and use or abuse of *mahosi* by the system, this paragraph is a further indictment thereof. Out of the total 60 (sixty) members of the said assembly 42 (forty-two) *mahosi* held sway and held the paramount decision on the membership thereof because their status automatically qualified them for seats in the said assembly. The mathematical magic number meant that only 18 (eighteen) seats were up for competing for in any ‘election’ at any given point in time (Breytenbach, 1975: 72; Benso, 1979: 43; SSP, 1983: 18; Khangala, 1999: 59-60). The fact that these members were appointed, instead of being elected, also points to the fact that *mahosi* were placed in an unavoidably tempting situation to refuse appointment and thus were ready to be used and abused, to further consolidate the success of the homeland policy. This further allowed *mahosi* to ‘rule the roost’, for lack of a better word. Ironically this practice was evidently foreign to *mahosi* as the majority of them were not educated; hence Patrick Mphephu and his supporters did not even have a tangible political party at the time or even a name thereof except to be simply referred to as “Recognised Leaders”, (Breytenbach, 1975: 73; Heroldt and Dombo, 1992: 76; Khangala, 1999: 59), an implication that unsurprisingly and predictably no political party formed existed.

Ironically during the preparations for the first ‘general elections’ the potential Vhavenda electorate to participate in the event of the 18 (eighteen) contested membership did not even know or understand the nitty-gritty of the said ‘democratic system’ and thus viewed *mahosi* within the context of the evolving modern politics of Westminster around which the homeland system was being modelled (Heroldt and Dombo, 1992: 76). To them *mahosi* were just that: their leaders in the context of the long-held pre-colonial and unwritten laws that were founded on Vhavenda value systems and

customs that have been accepted unquestioningly by communities for generations. Be that as it may the era of opposition politics had been ushered in within *vuhosi* and institutions by the homeland policy. The “Recognised Leaders” of traditionalist Patrick Mphephu, which later changed its name to Venda National Party (VNP), were pitted against the Venda Independent People’s Party (VIPP) under the leadership of University of the Witwatersrand social worker, Baldwin Mavhungu Mudau in the said ‘election’. Patrick Mphephu’s VNP also faced the opposition of the other minor front of independents. However, when everything had been said and done this laid the foundation for later ‘elections’ that were held on the 15th and 16th of August 1973. Interestingly ‘election’ officials were sourced from various *magota* and government officials (Breytenbach, 1975: 73; Meij, 1976: 127; Benso, 1979: 43; SPP, 1983: 18; Heroldt and Dombo, 1992: 76-77; Khangala, 1999: 59-60).

This afforded *mahosi* and officials with an opportunity to manipulate the electoral system; further prove that they had gradually allowed themselves to exist outside the confines of the checks-and-balances of the pre-colonial system. Predictably the illiterate rural people could not understand why they should vote for Baldwin Mudau instead of Patrick Mphephu with whom they had a lasting traditional history and allegiance; as a descendant of the well-known dynasty of Thohoyandou and Ramabulana (Khangala, 1999: 62). This made it possible for Patrick Mphephu to prevail and remain in the powerful and influential position over other *mahosi*, *magota* and Vhavenda. Succinctly put by Heroldt and Dombo (1992: 28) when referring to homeland citizenship in the case of the people residing within Bophuthatswana, the question of citizenship remained one of the major objections raised by black South Africans against the homelands system. In fact in terms of the Bophuthatswana Act of 1977 and the Republic of Venda Citizenship Act (Chapter 8, sections 59 (1 and 2) and 60 (a-e), respectively, all the people who were resident in these homelands automatically, and apparently mostly unawares, lost their South African citizenship. In the case of Vhavenda in particular, their birth-right should have been protected by Patrick Mphephu as a symbol of *vuhosi*, Vhavenda value systems and communalism.

According to Geldenhuys (1981: 1) the government’s homeland policy held a clear and attainable objective of ‘independence’ for the homelands ‘by hook or by crook’, with Venda becoming the third such a homeland after the Transkei and

Bophuthatswana (See also Status of Transkei Act, 1976 (100/1976); Status of Bophuthatswana Act, 1977 (89/1977) and Status of Venda Act, 1979 (107/1979). Therefore much as the 1973 'elections' was meant to inaugurate the said assembly, the second 'general elections' of 1978 was principally about forging ahead with preparations for Venda's 'homeland independence'; which 'elections' Patrick Mphahlele ironically lost. However, it is prudent to stay focussed on the fact that these 'elections' were a culmination of years of enactment of legislation through which the South African government led each homeland to eventual and mandatory 'independence' in terms of Proclamation of Self-government Act 46 of 1959 (South Africa, 1985: 206). Therefore Patrick Mphahlele's focus was on staying in power at any cost such that after his loss in the 'elections', and on realizing that the stakes were indeed high, he dissolved the assembly as he saw the 'independence' route as the best option to stay in power (Khangala, 1999: 79); a further indictment on the manner in which he had nailed the status and dignity of *vhuhosi* on the mast for everyone to throw mud at. Therefore his consideration for opting for 'independence' was politically motivated rather than traditional as it should have been the norm. Patrick Mphahlele had noticed the trend of his popularity taking a knock and realised that ultimately this would mitigate against his own position, both as a *khosi* and as a 'so-called' 'prime minister/ chief minister' of Vhavenda; a duality of position and crisis of identity as a *khosi* and a traditionalist (Meij, 1976: 128; Heroldt and Dombo, 1992: 78; Khangala, 1999: 80).

On 13 September 1979 Venda became 'sovereign independent state' of the 'Republic of Venda (RoV)' with 'Chief' P.R. Mphahlele as the first executive 'president' (Heroldt and Dombo, 1992: 78). Similarly, Nemudzivhadi (1985: 30) contends that when on 13 September 1979 Venda attained 'independence' it joined the world community of nations. However, the author appears to have ignored the fact that the 'independence' of *ethnic* homelands remained a farce for as long apartheid South Africa remained at the helm of government. Nemudzivhadi's statements need to be challenged because the policy of separate development of black South Africans along *ethnic* lines, among other political developments, had turned the RSA into a pariah state loathed, by the majority within the international community who were members of the United Nations (UN). On the one hand to claim that Venda joined the world community as a sovereign state was an act of ignorance and misinformation of the worst kind which seems to have been influenced by the conditions of the time, especially given the senior position

that Nemudzivhaḁi occupied in the 'RoV' (he was a Director-General (DG) in the 'presidency' and head of the Venda Legislative Assembly).

The Legislative Assembly in question was a mere rubberstamp of *mahosi* who were partly 'elected' and partly nominated therein, thus nothing was authentic and genuine about the whole process; hence the 'RoV' joined the other TBVC states just to belong to a list of South Africa's 'independence' induced entities as envisaged by the white government (Lipton, 1985: 53). On the other Nemudzivhaḁi could be forgiven for the 'crime' because when he released the source in 1985, as the most powerful official within the Venda National Assembly he did so as a compromised and interested individual of the homeland government who had no choice but toe the line. However, Heroldt and Dombo's publication was only released as an academic journal during the middle of 1992 when it was clear that South Africa was on the path to democracy and the reincorporation of all the ethnic homelands into the mainland was on the cards and imminent . Therefore, these authors' misconception on the status of Venda, whether intended or not, is mind-boggling. It suffices to say that the 'independence' of Bophuthatswana and Venda was harshly condemned both within and outside the African continent as a betrayal by the custodians of African values (Heroldt and Dombo, 1992: 31).

4.6.1 The Venda Constitution Act of 1979 and *vuhosi*

Butler, Rotberg and Adam (1977: 3) claim that the existence of the homelands and the elaboration of their institutions provided Africans with a new and potentially beneficial leverage on the otherwise rigid politics of South Africa. The current researcher would like to argue that the claim of a beneficial leverage by these authors is ridiculous because *mahosi* of Vhavana were co-opted as the main role players to continue with the rigid policy of apartheid at the expense of their people and value systems. This further made a mockery of the Vhavana dictum of '*khosi ndi khosi nga vhalanda*' because *mahosi* were officials of his master's voice since they were not administering their communities out of their own free will and cultural values but were just promoting apartheid even at the denigration of their *vuhosi* and institutions. Similarly, the claim by Bauer (1992) as well as Heroldt and Dombo (1992) that under the homeland administrations could only repeal any apartheid laws through the blessings of the

South African government makes a mockery of self-government, and subsequent 'independence', as it will be seen later in the study (Republic of Venda Constitution Act, Act. of 1979: 40-41; Republic of Bophuthatswana, 1977: 208; Bauer, 1992: 23; Heroldt and Dombo (1992: 78-83).

4.6.2 Application of the Venda Constitution Act

The Venda Constitution Act of 1979 was crafted in line with the Promotion of Self-government Act of 1969 to give rise to the so-called 'RoV' with 'Chief' Patrick Mphephu as the 'president'. Just on the eve of the elections, in September 1979 Mphephu was elevated to the position of 'paramount' *khosi*, which literally translated into Tshivenda meant *khosikhulu* (Heroldt and Dombo, 1992: 78-79; Khangala, 1999: 80). In the Tshivenda nomenclature *khosikhulu* is just a level below *thovhele* (king). However, because of his ignorance Patrick Mphephu regarded this as an elevation and the restoration of the *thovhele* status that had positioned the house of Ramabulana above the rest of *mahosi* in Venda. Although that were true it served the hallmarks of colonialism and Eurocentric refinement because he was still a level below the title of *thovhele* which his great-grandfathers originally occupied.

By conferring Patrick Mphephu the title of 'paramount chief' the South African government sought to consolidate his power and position him over other *mahosi* and to keep him gratified so as to continue serving their purpose; this being a reward for his obeisance and loyalty (Khangala, 1999: 80). However, Patrick Mphephu seemingly failed to understand that the highest original status of *thovhele* (king) had not been restored; hence he was comfortable with being referred to as 'paramount chief', a concept that was foreign to Vhavenda value system of governance. Secondly, because of the trappings of power, its perks and his eye on remaining the most powerful figure in Venda blinded him to reality and nitty-gritties of traditional values. He failed to see that he was actually a servant of the South African government and not his people through whom the maxim "*khosi ndi khosi nga vhalanda*" would always ring true. Therefore, when Patrick Mphephu died on 17 April 1988, he was still 'paramount chief' and 'president for life' as he had been expected to continue serving his master in Pretoria permanently. Thirdly, the status of 'paramount chief' had never been enjoyed by any other *khosi* of post-Mphephu-Boer War era and thus was viewed with awe by Patrick Mphephu and his ilk. In contrast his forebears Thohoyandou,

Mpofu, Makhado and Patrick Mphephu's grandfather Alilali Mphephu, had been *vhovhele* (kings); they should have been turning in their graves to see him enjoying a gratifying status of 'paramount chief' instead of *thivhele* (Khangala, 1999: 80).

Meanwhile, in order to 'gratify' the new leadership of the homeland, Patrick Mphephu and his national assembly were instructed to repeal a selected number of Acts to be in line with the functioning of the homeland government. Included in the process was the repeal of a specific number of legislation while some were deemed relevant to the 'RoV'. Those repealed were the Black Administration Act, 1927 (Act 38 of 1927); the Black Administration Act, 1929 (Act 9 of 1929), Amendment Section 10; the Electoral Consolidation Act (Act 46 of 1946); the Promotion of Black Self-government Act 1959 (Act 55 of 1959); the Republic of South Africa Constitution Act 1961 (Act 32 of 1961); the Black States Citizenship Act of 1970 (Act 26 of 1970); and the Black States Constitution Act (Act 21 of 1971) (See Republic of Venda Constitution Act, Act of 1979: 40-41). It will be clear that most of these legislation had been rendered obsolete since the ultimate objective of granting 'independence' to dVenda had been realized by both the South African government and Vhavenda traditionalists.

In terms of section 69 of Chapter 9 of the Republic of Venda Constitution of 1979, notwithstanding anything in the Constitution contained powers, authorities and functions lawfully exercised by the 'tribal' and regional councils in Venda immediately prior to the commencement of the Constitution were to remain in force until varied or withdrawn by the competent authority. This evolution made provision for the creation of a position of an 'executive president', a National Assembly or Parliament which would comprise both traditional leaders and 'popularly' elected members, an Executive Council (Cabinet) to be consulted by the President, and a judiciary which would function independent from the Executive (Republic of Venda Constitution Act, Act. 1979: 3-9; Republic of Bophuthatswana Constitution Act, 1977: 208-210). The constitution also made provision at a lower level for the retention of all existing community, 'tribal' and regional authorities in conjunction with the status and powers of *mahosi* and *magota*... meaning that the traditional system of local government which had developed over many centuries, was unilaterally subsumed and entrenched into the constitution (Republic of Venda Constitution Act, Act. 1979: 9-11; Republic of Bophuthatswana Constitution Act, 1977: 208-210; Bauer, 1992: 25). As it has been

mentioned above, according to Verwoerd a final solution for the “black problem” was devised in 1959, which later made black South Africans ‘independent’ from the white state through the system of Bantu homelands (Venter and Landsberg, 2011: 6).

The Republic of Venda Constitution Act (Act No. 9 of 1979) tempered with the essence of *vhuhosi* and institutions in many ways if the discussion on the role, functions and responsibilities of the various rungs discussed earlier in the study are anything to go by. Patrick Mphephu, whose grandfather had been demoted to *khosi* in 1899; though he himself was promoted to ‘paramount chief’ on the eve of ‘independence’ was no more walking in the steps of his forebears but fulfilling the apartheid mandate (Chapter 3, 1979: 3). He had been ‘designated’ as a president and in the process shed his historical value systems since being elected by ‘an electoral’ college also made a mockery of *vhuhosi* and institutions and spelled confusion to all and sundry of Vhavanḁa. In addition, according African value systems, and Vhavanḁa value systems in particular, *thovhele/ khosikhulu/ khosi* rules until his death to be succeeded by a legitimate heir. This element of ruling for one’s entire lifetime was modified along the essence of dictatorships reminiscent of people like former Malawi President Kamuzu Banda, when Patrick Mphephu was declared ‘life president’ by the Venda Constitution at the behest of the South African authorities (Chapter 3, 1979: 5). Thus the traditional system was being used and abused to fulfil the draconian apartheid homeland system. Hence instead of Patrick Mphephu being head of a traditional system that had been passed from generation to generation, he was assisting in using it to deprive his people of their birth-right and everything that was African as a head of a government-designed and manipulated political system. Thus Patrick Mphephu and all the rungs of traditional government were complicit in undoing something that had been valued from time immemorial with the use of ‘tribal’ and regional councils and the appointment and/ or creation of *vhuhosi* when the time suited him and the homeland system (Venda Constitution Act of 1979: 9, 10, 11 and 12). The next chapter attempts to show how this sowed seeds for tension among Vhavanḁa, especially within the internal relations of the various royal families of *vhuhosi* of Vhavanḁa. In the same vein Patrick Mphephu was found wanting as a unifying symbol of the various royal families.

4.7 The Missionaries within the Eurocentric Colonial Conundrum

Depending on which side of the fence the reader and the audience stand, the missionaries were either regarded as neutral agents that came to the colonies, South Africa, and Venda in particular, under the guise of evangelisation, Christianisation/ conversion as well as the social transformation project of black South Africans, or spoilers of socio-political and economic African affairs. Therefore it would be naïve not to focus on the conversion project without shifting the lens towards the actual role of the missionaries in undoing everything African during the colonial project. Khorommbi (2001: 176) advances that subjugation, white domination and privileges resulted from the time of white settlement in the Cape in 1652. This much was raised by the current researcher during the opening of this study. In other words this goes to point to the fact that the basis for all domination and ‘missionisation’ has a long history that started long before the subjugation of Vhavenda during the close of the 19th (nineteenth) century after the Mphephu-Boer War. Therefore it is prudent to close the discussion of this chapter by according due focus to the place of missionaries or ‘missionisation’ *vis-à-vis* the assault on African value systems, and Vhavenda values system particularly.

Khorommbi (2001: 176) argues that in pre-industrial South Africa three main features characterised social relations. These were slavery and territorial conquests which placed an unskilled and ‘right-less’ black labour force at the mercy of white control. He further avers that there were always enough whites to man all the strategic positions in the political, economic and administrative systems of the country. The third contention is that the growing racial discrimination characterised colonial society from the late eighteenth century onwards. In cementing these points, Khorommbi (2001: 176) argues that all these developments were endorsed by the church, especially the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) to which the colonisers of Dutch origin were aligned. To this end Khorommbi (2001: 176) is of the view that according to German missiologists such as Gustav Warneck, the gospel should not be proclaimed to humankind in general, but to each nation and group in ways appropriate to their culture; hence by appreciating their uniqueness as compared to the “*other*” (See also Ndou, 2018, 2000 and 1993).

In this regard, regardless of this caution by Warneck as cited by Khorommbi (2001: 176), Nđou (2018: 102) argues that the missionaries did not care to know anything about the culture and practices of Vhaventđa such that as a result there was a misunderstanding and communication breakdown between the two parties. The current researcher would like to argue that whatever 'misunderstanding' that might have ensued between Vhaventđa and missionaries was not really out of misunderstanding per se, but out of the undermining tendencies of everything indigenous by the missionaries because they ignored Warneck's thinking about the essence of African value systems and culture. To support this Nđou (1993: 14) argues that Christianisation should have been based on the tenets of traditional religion. Nđou (1993: 138) further contends that this was not to be because the first missionaries who worked among Vhaventđa were prejudiced against the usage of traditional religious elements as they regarded Africans as heathen. In addition this author posits that this was ironic because, for example, the mission church used water during Holy Communion and baptism such that even among Vhaventđa the high priest (*tshifhe*) of the *khosi* used water when conducting sacrificial ritual elements. This means that regardless of these similarities, the missionaries viewed the indigenous value of water as heathen, primitive and backward, when used by Vhaventđa during such specific occasions whereas looked at theirs as superior when applied to the same Vhaventđa converts. In his studies Nđou (1993; 2000; 2018) also discussed missionaries of various denominations and in his sources exposed similarities in the way they regarded Vhaventđa and traditional leaders: with utter denigration and abhorrance.

According to Mathivha (1985), Munyai (1989); Ramudzuli (1998), Nđou (1993; 2000; 2018) Kirkaldy (2002; 2003; 2004; 2005) and Jeannerat (2007) the missionaries arrived in the eastern part of Vevđatđa at the behest of *Khosi* Ligege Tshivhase who had invited them to establish a mission station at Ha-Tshivhase after he was attracted by their work in the Blauberger and Bapedi-held territories; above all he wanted education for his people. Kirkaldy (2004: 14) adds that although *Khosi* Mphaphuli also invited the missionaries to come to his territory he himself was resistant to missionary conversion and the establishment of a mission station therein. Importantly what these *mahosi* had hoped for was to use the missionaries as mediators between them and the encroaching potential white settlers who they feared would take away their land. However, close contact with Vhaventđa prompted the missionaries to *specifically*

condemn most African customs and traditions as primitive and unchristian, for which reason they advocated that everything must be abandoned in favour of the demands of the new religion and new values installed by the colonial government (Nǎdou; 1993: 14 and 138; INLOGOV, 1995: 71). According to them one had either to adopt education and religious systems and be a 'modern' person or stick to the traditional values and remain 'primitive'. The pressure was too high, too attractive and too obscure to be able to read any signs of blackmail into it. Resultantly many African communities accepted the adoption of and adaptation into the new changes without first critically analysing the structures and potential hazards these new values carried with them. Resultantly, new religious beliefs were embraced and traditional religions discarded without much fuss (INLOGOV, 1995: 71).

Regardless of this evidence of capitulation to conversion, the missionaries were not satisfied as they wished to get more out of their acquired subjects; they wanted them to be more docile, show obeisance and to be manageable communities. Kirkaldy (2005: 1) says that missionaries believed that their presence in Venda was essential to quell wars of succession and other internal conflicts. This author further avers that the missionaries believed that these conflicts could only be contained by the victory of the colonial state and the establishment of locations under the control of various *mahosi*. Therefore, the missionaries believed that Christianity would never triumph in Venda if the area was still ruled by *mahosi*. In this vein the Berlin Missionaries could not help rejoicing in the opportunities for evangelisation which the downfall of Aǎlali Mphephu, the perceived greatest enemy, and the ending of Vhavana independence brought to them, after years of resistance by Ramabulana and Makhado, before him (Kirkaldy 2005: 2). It is evident at this point that the missionaries were showing their true nature and intentions of coming to Venda. It also shows that much as they wanted to establish missionary stations in Venda, they were also hungry for the fertile and arable land as well as the abundance of cheap black labour. In the meantime because Ramabulana, and later his son Makhado, had rejected their overtures, they viewed him as an enemy and thus persuaded Tshivhase and Mphaphuli against forming an alliance with him (Ramudzuli, 1989: 3; Kirkaldy (2005: 2), to ensure his downfall.

Shillington (1985: 17) notes that: "While the missionaries were urging for an increasing emphasis upon agriculture, made possible by their introduction of the new techniques

of irrigation and ploughing, the large-scale importation of firearms was simultaneously working to the long-term advantage of the missionaries.” This denudes the usually ignored reality that the more military force was used to make Africans toe the line, like it happened in the case of Makhado and Alilali Mphephu; the missionaries still saw the benefit of this being used to break the resistance of *mahosi* and their subjects. However, the most part of northern part of the Soutpansberg was essentially cleared of white settlers by Makhado until the conquest of Vhavenda in the Mphephu-Boer War of 1898. According to Kirkaldy (2005: 6) it is against this background of conflict, labour-raiding shifting alliances and mistrust, as well as the victory over the white settlers at Schoemansdal, that the missionaries came to operate in Venda. In fact Kirkaldy (2005: 2) and Ndou (2000 and 2018: 209 and 106) also show that although they pretended to be ‘honest brokers’ they acted in a way which promoted the ultimate establishment of white control over Venda; this which was accompanied by taxation and control over land. In this regard Mathivha (1985: 14) and Ndou (2000: 208; 2018: 105) contend missionaries who could not interfere with the political powers of *mahosi* became successful in their mission work whereas those that were seen as critical of everything that was African, stealing subjects away from *mahosi* and helped in the introduction of taxes were seen as enemies of the polities.

As if to support the tone of the above paragraph, one Lethabo Khambule quotes national co-ordinator of Traditional Healers Organisation (THO) Phepsile Maseko, who posits that: “Christianity brainwashed African people. People can choose any religion they desire, but it shouldn’t be done at the expense of tradition and African spirituality” (*Daily Sun*, Tuesday 30 April 2019: 3). The paragraph above therefore supports Maseko’s argument that what happened during the era of colonialism compromised all that encapsulated African value systems because when people were forced to convert to Christianity they were forbidden to have any link with their African being and those members of the community who were not yet christianised or opted for missionary religion. In contrast Bishop Thys Molekoa of Holy St. John’s (*Daily Sun*, Tuesday 30 April 2019: 3) dismisses the claim that Christianity did not allow African people to practice tradition and spirituality. This raises questions about the neutrality or honesty of the Bishop, especially as an African religious leader, if by any chance he might have gone through religious training.

Some sources that focused on the conversion project generally attest to the fact that agents of Christianity, especially missionaries, forced and forbade their followers to associate with African traditional practices: Giesekke (1972); Munyai (1979); Mathivha (1985); Ramudzuli (1988); Ndou (2002); Kirkaldy (2002); Kirkaldy (2003); Kirkaldy (2004); Halala (2011), among others. Therefore it would be a travesty of honesty to pretend that this attitude by the missionaries towards Africans, whether converted or not did not exist. While this socio-political assault continued religious agents in the form of missionaries played their part by using education and religion such that the social impact on African values was intensive and devastating (INLOGOV, 1995: 72). As if to similarly dismiss the claim by the 'honourable' Bishop regarding the pliability and accommodative nature of Christianity, Van Rensburg (2013: 33) also avers that Christians were encouraged by the missionaries to accept uncritically the European and North American patterns of social and political order. Therefore it would be generous for anyone to place himself or herself on the myopically forgiving pedestal regarding the role that the missionaries played during colonialism in Africa and Venda in particular. For example, the missionaries criticised the practice of *dzunde* among Vhavenda as oppressive, something that was ironically voluntarily and with allegiance offered to *mahosi* and *magota*, whereas the missionaries in turn introduced this after they had acquired and established their mission stations on African lands; thus bringing a element of clashes between them and *mahosi* (Mathivha, 1985: 19; Ndou (2000: 203; 2018: 103).

It is worth noting that the missionaries were the only link between Vhavenda and the white authorities wherein the needs of Vhavenda were basically rural in nature at that point in time (Khangala, 1999: 25). In addition, Kirkaldy (2004: 15) contends that although *mahosi* allowed for the establishment of schools in their areas, they only wanted to use missionaries as mediators between themselves and the white authorities while keeping them at a fair distance. This shows that *mahosi* needed the missionaries as mediators but were suspicious of their true intentions, meaning that they did not trust them and avoided to have them very close to their royal families for fear of losing their members to conversion. Resultantly *mahosi* of Vhavenda were open to working closely with government officials such as Native Commissioners, but had reservations working with white missionaries in their areas. The same cannot be said about most of the youth who attended missionary schools as they were easily

lured into clutches of mission stations in search of education (Ramudzuli, 1989: 44; Munyai, 1989: 35).

A vivid example is that of *Khosi* Nesengani, elsewhere called Davhana, who at one stage explained that his relationship with the Swiss missionaries in his area had been strained to the point that he even demolished their school and forced them to leave his area. After establishing his own school he invited the government to get involved in the establishment of other schools in his area (SA K20 3(22), Tomlinson Report, pp. 1101-1111, Record of Evidence, Pietersburg). This explains why although the Berlin Missionaries had established three stations in Ha-Tshivhase at Beuster or Maungani and Georgenholtz, as well as Madzivhandila's Tshakhuma, the main *mahosi* (Ramabulana, Tshivhase and Mphaphuli) resisted the founding of more stations in their areas, let alone those under *magota*, more so because the missionaries were hell-bent on advancing their influence by attempting to convert these powerful *mahosi* (Kirkaldy, 2004: 14-15). This shows that regardless of their non-existent level of education *mahosi* slept with one eye open when it came to believing in or trusting the missionaries. The main bone of contention was the practice of missionaries of wanting to take control of the land of *mahosi* and in turn want to sell it back to *mahosi* at inflated prices (Halala, 2011: 122): this was a deliberate attempt to make it difficult, if not impossible for *mahosi* to buy the land back for their own use and that of their communities.

In the same vein another case in point is that of a motion during the debate in the VTA where and when Patrick Mphephu and *Khosi* Masia expressed reservations about missionaries interfering in their traditions and customs like *domba* and *vhusha* (part of female initiation schools) because they always tried to stop people from holding or attending such traditional schools (BAO 56/8/4/2, Part 11, Thohoyandou Territorial Authority, Motion 15). Lastly, it is no wonder that to *mahosi* African 'modernized' religious institutions, elsewhere referred to as African Independent Churches or African Indigenous Churches (AIC), which sprung up throughout South Africa as a response to the mistrust of mission churches proved to be more preferable because, not only were they of African religious leadership but they had infused customs and tradition into their teachings (Jeannerat, 2007; Ndou, 1993, 2000 and 2010). This

made them relevant to the traditional Muvenda who was shunned by the missionary church because of traditional beliefs and customs.

4.8 Conclusion

This chapter discussed the Afrocentric value of the concept “traditional” in order to show how it mattered in the foundation of value systems that determined the political, social and economic sphere within *vuhosi* of Vhavana. In essence the current researcher wanted to lay a foundation for the discussion of the chapter as it focused on the changing relationship between *mahosi* and the South African authorities, be they colonial and those during the apartheid era. The evidence pointing to the advent of the changing relationship between *mahosi* and the South African government is the start of a longdrawn assault on African values systems; immediately after the defeat and subjugation of Ailali Mphephu and his community. Following this was Ailali Mphephu forced removal from Songozwi/ Sunguzwi, the division of his land among commercial white farmers and created *mahosi*, the enforcement of taxation and the enactment of a barrage of legislation; following the enactment of the South Africa Act of 1909 to the Venda Constitution of 1979.

Accompanying this was the imposition of self-government and homeland ‘independence’, wherein in essence *mahosi* became agents of both colonialism and apartheid. The current researcher also realised that a discussion on these changing relationship between *mahosi* and the white authorities would have been left wanting had the role and influence of the missionaries been left out of the scope of the discussion. As a result the response of Vhavana in this regard was visited, alas on a minimal scale as this is a subject for a different study and has been attempted by other scholars, even if that was not from an Afrocentric perspective. It suffices to say that one of the manners in which Africa, and Vhavana in particular, responded was the establishment of the African Independent Churches or African Indigenous Churches (AIC) where teachings were infused with African customs and tradition. The next chapter examines the impact of Vhavana homeland policy on the internal relations among *mahosi* of Vhavana by looking at the resultant tensions that emanated therefrom.

Chapter 5

The Impact of Homeland Policy on the Internal Relations among *Mahosi* of Vhavenda *vis-à-vis* Internal Tensions within the Homeland

“South Africa is a society of victims and beneficiaries, not just victims and perpetrators.” Mahmood Mamdani quoted by Fick (July 13 to 19, 2018: 34)

5.1 Introduction

It is clear at this point that the white regime used the advantage of the proximity of *vuhosi* and institutions to the rural communities to align it to the homeland policy and thus use it as a bulwark of its segregationist policy. In the ultimate the impact that this would have on the internal relations of *mahosi* and their communities could not be laid bare to the naked eye of the unsuspecting ‘victims’ of the ‘RoV’, especially with the so-called ‘independence’ on the way. Coupled with this was the naïvete of *mahosi* because of their inherent ignorance, which made them collaborators that aided the impact of the Westminster system on the African value system. Khangala (1999: 32) claims that as the leader of the Venda homeland, Patrick Mphephu encouraged others to abide by the dictates of the policy of separate development. However, by this date the status of *thovhele* that Patrick Mphephu had hoped would be revived had been irreversibly tempered with because some *magota* had been elevated to *vuhosi* to be of equal status with their hereditary and historical seniors: Ramabulana, Tshivhase and Mphaphuli (Nemudzivhadi, 1977: 15; Nemudzivhadi, 2017: 69).

In the same breadth Verwoerd’s politico-economic goal was to transform *mahosi* and their communities within their territories into being perpetually economically dependent on white South Africa, consolidate their co-operation with the white authorities and ultimately make them descend to the mercy of the central government to keep them coming back to the central government with begging bowls (Omer-Cooper, 1987: 229). This turn of events drastically altered the nature and direction of the internal relations of *vuhosi* and institutions and in turn changed relationship between *mahosi* of Vhavenda and the South African government. This chapter attempts to traverse the

impact that the homeland system had on the internal relations within *vhuhosi* and institutions.

5.2 The Homeland Policy and the Internal Relations within *Vhuhosi*

Heroldt and Dombo (1992: 79) posit that in order to prove the investment of *mahosi*'s support of the homeland policy of the so-called 'independence' of the 'RoV', on 13 September 1979 Patrick Mphephu reportedly declared that: "The 'chiefs' of Venda still have an extremely important function to fulfil, and it is only through them that the various communities can be encouraged to help themselves." A loaded statement indeed, because on the one hand it addresses *mahosi* directly and their respective communities indirectly, as a clarion call to action to support the system as he anticipated that he and his cohorts would benefit from it. Meanwhile Patrick Mphephu was obviously ignorant to the fact that *vhuhosi* and the values of its institutions had been 'captured' by the homeland system (URU 844 5677, Venda Territorial and Regional Authorities: Salaries and allowances, 1969: 2). On the other Patrick Mphephu's words were like waving a stick to the members of his cabinet, the entire *mahosi* and the various communities they 'represented' to toe the line and thus also instil a sense of belonging, 'ethnic nationalism and patriotism' as well as make his administration a success *vis-à-vis* the achievement by the apartheid government of their racist and segregation objectives.

However, Patrick Mphephu was apparently laying the ground to consolidate his power and control the homeland by force, if need be, to make his stay as the 'president' of the homeland permanent (Schneider, 1981: 143). It is also the view of the current researcher that by the time of 'independence' the relationship between *mahosi*, inasmuch as some had been demoted while others had positions created for them while some were promoted, South Africa had undergone negative socio-political changes. This is because the changes within *vhuhosi* and institutions assisted the irreversible impact on the internal relations among *mahosi* and even affected the very essence of *vhuhosi* and institutions of Vhavanḁa. This chapter attempts to denude the changing internal relations linked to Patrick Mphephu's 'political narcissism', for lack of a better word: to him the world was "in his pocket".

5.2.1 Patrick Mphedu Ramabulana's powers as homeland 'president': A trump card for *vhuhosi* internal relations

For starters Patrick Mphedu's six-member 'self-government' cabinet comprising of five *mahosi*, thus eighty-three-percent (83%) of the entire cabinet, is an indication of the crucial role, dominance and influence of *vhuhosi* in promoting the homeland policy. In addition the chairperson of the cabinet, in no uncertain terms had to be a *khosi*, Patrick Mphedu, supported by four (4) of *mahosi*, another trump card in consolidating the policy with their dominance, presence, power and authority. Essentially key cabinet portfolios were under *mahosi*: traditional affairs and finances, community affairs, agriculture, public works as well as education and culture, while justice was given to a senior public servant (Verslag van die Departement van Banto-Administrasie en Ontwikkeling, 1 Januarie 1971 tot 31 Desember 1971: 53; Meij, 1976: 125).

The inclusion of one senior public servant might be interpreted as a sign of the individual's closeness and loyalty to *mahosi*, or Patrick Mphedu in particular, since the essence and prerequisite of the former's qualification to the position is not clear. Of significance is that the clause dictated that the composition of the cabinet should not be less than three *mahosi* in number (Verslag van die Departement, 1 Januarie 1971 tot 31 Desember 1971: 53). The current researcher would like to believe that the inclusion and presence of a 'lone duck' senior public servant in the administration is a reminder of the address by Patrick Mphedu on the day of the 'RoV's 'independence': for 'chiefs' to fulfil a function and through them the various communities be encouraged to help themselves (Heroldt and Dombo, 1992: 79). In addition the onus to appoint members of the cabinet lay in Patrick Mphedu, to identify one with "special knowledge, qualifications or wide experience to comply with the requirements of section 28 (a) and (b) which speak of qualifications to the membership of the National Assembly: (a) being over the age of twenty-five years; and (b) is a citizen of Venda" (Republic of Venda, National Assembly Standing Rules of Procedure, 1984: 9).

Attached to the qualification was De Wet Nel's declaration that a "learned man is the one with a good character, a man with experience, and a man who looked optimistically to the future of his people" (BAO 56/8/4/3, 1967: 3). The current researcher would like to argue that as traditionalists some of these *mahosi* qualified by virtue of possessing a mere standard six to elevate to *vhuhosi*; and being a convert

to Christianity worked in their favour such that the claim of education was ridiculously remote. Secondly, the qualification that far outweighed others and resonated with Patrick Mphphu's expectations was that of "good character and a man who optimistically looks to the future of his people"; which future was being hamstrung by the homeland policy (Republic of Venda, 1984: 7). However, against this statement is section 25 (b) which stipulates that the 'paramount chief' had the powers to appoint 'chiefs' to the 'national assembly' to make the number twenty-eight and any additional person who may be appointed to an established 'chieftainship' (Republic of Venda, 1984: 7). It suffices to say that as a staunch traditionalist (Khangala, 1999: 24; Nemudzivhadi, 1977: 15), Patrick Mphphu had sold Vhavanḁa to the devil: the apartheid's homeland policy.

The fact that Patrick Mphphu had extensive powers over the whole of Venḁa meant that he held sway on power relationships and so could dictate things in the territory. The Venḁa Constitution had been designated Patrick Mphphu 'president for life' and head of government, Commander-in-Chief of the Venda Defence Force (VDF), such that this empowered him to maintain law and order (Republic of Venda, Constitution Act of 1979: National Assembly Standing Rules of Procedure, Constitution Act 1984: 1 and 4; Bantoe en Tradisionale Sake (BTS)/ Bantu and Traditional Affairs (BTA), Vol. 1, Venda Relations with South Africa, 1/237/3, 1989: 3). Therefore, the so-called 'qualifications' alluded to above speak volumes regarding Patrick Mphphu's powers since he could enforce authority in Venḁa; all *mahosi* were practically at his mercy as anticipated by his masters in Pretoria who expected the same from Vhavanḁa. As 'paramount chief' he controlled (a) the National Assembly; (b) Bureau for National Intelligence; (c) Bureau for Information and Broadcasting; (d) and Public Service Commission (BTS/BTA, 1/237/3, 1989: 3). It is clear from this evidence that Patrick Mphphu controlled every 'nook and cranny' in the homeland, he had his ear fully to the ground, and he expected nothing less than obedience and full co-operation from all *mahosi* in the National Assembly: a symbol of anti-*vuhosi* and political brinkmanship. Ironically Part III of the 1984 National Assembly Rules, the "Maintenance of Order and Rules of Debate: Conduct and Speeches of Members" no. 25 (Republic of Venda, Constitution Act of 1979. National Assembly Standing Rules of Procedure, Constitution Act 1984: 5) reads:

Neither the president, a minister, deputy minister, paramount chief, chief or dignitary, being a member of the Assembly, may claim preferential treatment in the Assembly, by virtue of his heredity or other position and such members shall set an example to other members in their respect and obedience to the Chair and in maintaining the order and dignity of the Assembly and the proceedings thereof.

The fact of the matter is that because *mahosi* were overly respectful to Patrick Mphahlele they enjoyed preferential treatment to fulfil the mandate of 'homeland policy' as set out by Pretoria and thereby assisted in consolidating Patrick Mphahlele's position in the homeland and helped enforce law and order for the 'life-president'. It is no wonder that during the 1984 elections, the first after five years after the so-called 'independence', VIPP members were refused permission to hold political rallies. They were victims of open threats by pro-VNP *mahosi* and *magota* as supporters of the VIPP were regarded as subversive (Heroldt and Dombo, 1992: 80). Resultantly the VNP enjoyed the upper hand because of the patronage it enjoyed from senior civil servants, who would not risk losing their jobs, and pensioners in Venda, such that the party ruled the roost as the prime managers of internal relations among *mahosi vis-à-vis* their communities (Heroldt and Dombo, 1992: 80). The rule by iron fist enforced by Patrick Mphahlele ensured that the internal relations maintained his power while customary law was in turn continuously violated to consolidate his power (Khangala, 1999: 37). He had the way-with-all to decide who to elevate to *vuhosi* and who not to: a responsibility that was previously customarily sacrosanct before it was usurped by the Governor-General and later Patrick Mphahlele. Unlike him being the staunch traditionalist as claimed by Khangala (1999: 24), Patrick Mphahlele was indiscriminately violating the same African/ Vhavenda value systems that he was supposed to protect, preserve, project and entrench. Therefore he was overly 'captured' by Pretoria to undermine the unwritten laws of *vuhosi* and institutions such that he was imbued in the political landscape in which he combined traditionalism and the Westminster system to put African/ Vhavenda values at the altar of political expediency.

It is the view of the current researcher that by this time the internal relations among *mahosi* had been drastically altered. As a result this weakened the institution and

violated customary laws of succession, as will be seen later, as long as *mahosi* remained under the favourable radar of Patrick Mphephu (Report of Commission of Inquiry into Venda Vhuhosi Affairs, 1990/91: 11; Heroldt and Dombo, 1992: 84; Nenguda, 1990: 40-44; Dangale, 1993: 20-23, 29-31). The current researcher could not help but take a leaf from Lonsdale (2000: 7) who encapsulates the transformation of *vhuhosi* and institutions within the homeland system thus: "... independence was an episode in a comedy in which the... powers were handed over to their selected and groomed bourgeois successors and in which nothing fundamental was changed." Thus Patrick Mphephu and his cohorts continued to abuse *vhuhosi* and institutions with impunity by using those who were easily pliable, as long as they toed the party line while *mahosi* remained powerless servants of Pretoria. The crucial role played by *mahosi* in Venda during his reign was aptly pointed out as the only factor that maintained his longevity in power which in his own words, Patrick Mphephu once pointed out that: "As long as *mahosi* and *magota* are and remain actively participating in ruling at both levels of government, peace, order, progress and stability will continue" (Heroldt and Dombo, 1992: 81). His words were another clarion call to *mahosi* that as long as they remained unwaveringly loyal to the ideal of keeping him and the VNP in power as 'president for life' their future was secure. It is therefore not surprising that after the first 'post-independence' elections in 1984 Patrick Mphephu opted to transform the 'RoV' into a one-party state; this which resonated with authoritarian rule (Khangala, 1999: 62).

Ironically Patrick Mphephu claimed that embarking on a one-party state was not an indication of the fear of the opposition, but to ensure an orderly and peaceful society, because a two-party system was incompatible with Africa's tradition of arriving at political decisions (Heroldt and Dombo, 81-82). Musitha³⁹ (interviewed 1 July 2019) adds that Patrick Mphephu's strategy was characteristic of African politics because *vhuhosi* is a lifetime responsibility. Patrick Mphephu himself did not appear privy to the compromising position that traditional values had suffered under him as an agent of the homeland policy, while unquestioningly dragging other staunch traditionalists down with him. In this regard, for him to invoke the traditionalist card in order to

³⁹ Dr. Mavhungu Elias Musitha works as a Senior Manager at the Limpopo Tourism Agency (LTA) and he is also a Research Fellow at the University of South Africa (UNISA)

establish a one-party state within the 'RoV' was hypocritical to say the least. It was also an indication that he was either ignorant of the landscape he had imbedded himself in or he just believed himself to be invincible. Equally by embarking on a one-party-state arrangement this meant that he felt politically insecure. To drive this point home one Pat Derian, Assistant Secretary for Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs, Amnesty International, averred that "clothing Mphephu in striped tail coats and top-hats did not necessarily make him a president. He further says that Mphephu might not even realise his political clowning" (Bantoe Tradisionale Sake (BTS)/ Bantu Traditional Affairs (BTA), Vol. 1, Venda Relations with South Africa, 1/237/3, 1989: 10). Therefore Patrick Mphephu believed that the 'RoV'-South Africa relations were at state to state level while essentially white South Africa benefitted the most politically from such an imposed arrangement.

5.2.2 Patrick Mphephu's short journey from one-party state to his death

As it has been reminiscent of dictatorships and one-party states elsewhere in Africa, Patrick Mphephu's VNP proceeded into an election early in 1988 which by this time was without any opposition challenge (Meij, 1976: 127; Heroldt and Dombo, 1992: 82; Khangala 1999: 47). The 'candidates' who went to the polls were all pro-VNP members vying for a seat in the so-called National Assembly; which made them phenotypes ideologically, if such a concept can be applicable in such a political 'comedy of errors', as referred to by Lonsdale (2000: 7). In the same breadth, it had already been bandied about by *mahosi* by 26 February 1987 that the lifespan of the National Assembly should be amended from five years to seven years, as proposed by then controversial Minister of National Assembly, Alfred Alidzulwi (known as A.A.) (Government Gazette, vol. 16, no. 84 and no. 32, Department of National Assembly and Local Governments: Dissolution of the Territorial Councils, 1988: 1-2; Heroldt and Dombo, 1992: 82). As salaried appointments and members of the same institution *mahosi* had to toe the line as perpetual beneficiaries of the so-called one-party state such that the outcome of the seven-year life span proposal was a done deal, regardless of any misgivings that might have existed among some *mahosi* who would not dare utter a word in this regard (Musitha, interviewed 1 July 2019).

As expected the 1988 elections consolidated the VNP's hold on power to the point that the impact on *vuhosi* internal relations was felt by every 'Muvenda citizen' as they

were expected to be compulsory members of the VNP: which was typical of dictatorships (Cadman, 1986: 10; Zuma, 1989: 10; Heroldt and Dombo, 1992: 82; Khangala, 1999: 62). Referring to the values of democracy, Degenaar (1987: 10) posits that “citizenship refers to the equal value attributed to all members of society. It presupposes a political space in which subjects are transformed into citizens, and individuals are involved in decision-making... The principle of representation entails that representatives are elected by the people to govern on their behalf.” In support of this, the current researcher could not help but drink from Nompumelelo Runji’s cup (*Sowetan*, Thursday October 4, 2018: 6) who opines that democracy is enriched by two important elements: (a) vertical accountability which is the ability of the electorate to hold public representatives to account such that the government ought to be responsive and answerable to the citizenry; and (b) horizontal accountability according to which the separation of powers, where different branches of government act as check-and-balances on each other and the legislature ought to hold the executive to account. To drive the point home Degenaar (1987: 10) further refers to government by consent wherein the primary source of legitimacy for the state is consent by the governed and whereat the same is pronounced by credible regular elections.

From these words by Runji and Degenaar above, the current researcher would like to argue that although in the case of Venda there were so-called regular elections, the fact that the territory was a one-party ‘state’ and people were compelled to be members of the only existing political party, the VNP, means that there was no government by consent regardless of regular elections. No one could hold the homeland government and its politicians to account. Unsurprisingly the calculated one-party strategy of the VNP led to internal relations which were rocked by internal tensions that engulfed Venda and intensified after the death of ‘life president’, Patrick Mphephu, on 17 April 1988, from what was rumoured to be poisoning (Cadman, 1986: 12; Zuma, 1989: 12; Khangala, 1999: 88, 98, 99; Khorommbi, 2001: 203-205). He was succeeded by *Gota* Frank Ravele, his cousin, so as to consolidate political power within the Ramabulana house. In order to honour Patrick Mphephu’s legacy a giant statue was erected and it still adorns the entrance of the former homeland ‘parliament’ (Heroldt and Dombo, 1992: 82). Musiṭha (Interviewed 1 July 2019) avers that the controversial death of Patrick Mphephu was a shrouded challenge to his legitimacy,

and that of his government; an indication of internal tensions among the homeland rulers and the government machinery.

That being said after the death of Patrick Mphahlele, Frank Ravele mooted a proposal to amend the Venda Constitution to place the institution of *vhuhosi* and the status of 'paramount chief' above party politics. With this he created an opening for 'paramount chief' to cease being a member of the VNP and be a 'symbol of unity' in Venda (Heroldt and Dombo, 1992: 82). This was obviously a sham and a continuation of a strategy by Patrick Mphahlele because the people were still expected to remain as members of the VNP, another ploy at unity. According to Ravele the 'paramount chief' position and person would only be vested with powers to settle succession disputes within *vhuhosi* as well as install and remove any *khosi* if such "would be in the interest of Vhavanḁa" (Thohoyandou Newspaper, 30 September 1988: 3; See also Republic of Venda: Report on the National Assembly for 1988: 2.). This was tantamount to taking over the sacrosanct and valued role of the royal families and councils-of-elders in such matters.

5.2.3 The plight of unemployed Vhavanḁa masses dumped in the homeland

The plight of Vhavanḁa was also at the mercy of the homeland leaders because after 'independence' the 'RoV' together with its sister TBVC states became the dumping grounds of unemployed black South Africans after they were forcibly removed from the urban areas (Omer-Cooper, 1987: 229; Oomen, 2005: 18; Musiḁha, 2012: 46, 47; Musiḁha, interviewed on 1 July 2019). The apartheid government was hell-bent on using the homelands to curb the influx of black urbanisation and thus force Vhavanḁa into submission under the corrupt rule of *mahosi* who in the past they used to respect and pay allegiance to as authentic rulers. Even on assumptions most favourable to the policy, the Vevḁa homeland provided jobs for less than a third of new work-seekers from within while they could not absorb those who were forced to leave the urban areas during their enforced *ethnic* citizenship (Lipton, 1985: 53 and 77). Posel (1991: 1) adds that the ambitious and ruthless programme of social engineering stripped the majority of Africans of their South African citizenship when they were forcibly removed to putative *ethnic* 'homelands'. Within this equation was the fact that the apartheid government cleverly wanted to make these unemployed masses to live at the mercy of these *mahosi* since they had no economic means to support themselves and their

next of kin or even pay controversial taxes. According to Schneider (1981: 143) clients give support to the possessor of the resource, who translates this support into authority and 'chiefship'. Therefore Vhavenda were carted back to the dumping grounds to live under *mahosi* who had lost the essence of value systems as stooges of the homeland policy. Accordingly the transfer of power to created *mahosi* deepened the rift among them and the commoners as it was widely suspected that these *mahosi* were enriching themselves through the Bantu Authorities schemes and the homeland taxation systems (Redding, 1996: 562); another indictment of the erosion of communalism.

Actually by the time of 'independence' the 'RoV' was still highly rural and did not resemble any inkling of urban expansion, except for a small shopping complex in the newly established small business centre of Thohoyandou, such that any hope of adequate employment opportunities was highly remote for Vhavenda. To cement this Omer-Cooper (1987: 229) argues that because unlike in the past the homelands had been changed from sources of labour supply to the urban areas to dumping areas this translated into even less opportunities for work on a migrant basis for people in the Bantustans. According to Posel (1991: 4, 7) industrial decentralisation, population removals and restrictions on the scale of African employment in urban areas and homelands were central to the design of apartheid from the start; and so was addressing the needs of white commercial agriculture. By 1985 it became clear that Venda could not provide work for most of its people, more so as the number of the unemployed continued to rise as more people were carted from the urban areas. Resultantly a 'Special Employment Approach Programme' (SEAP) was introduced between 1985 and 1986 with the aim of providing informal employment to about 4500 unemployed Vhavenda (Bantoe Tradisionale Sake (BTS)/ Bantu Traditional Affairs (BTA), Vol. 1, Venda-South Africa Ministerial Meetings, 1/237/3/4, 1989: 5; Feinberg, 2006: 131). According to Omer-Cooper (1987: 229) people found themselves trapped in hopeless poverty with no hope of escape through employment in the white areas. This created a powder-keg that eventually exploded in the late 1980s (nineteen-eighties) and early 1990s (nineteen-nineties) fuelled by Patrick Mphephu's grip on power through the complicit of *mahosi* (Bantoe Tradisionale Sake (BTS)/ Bantu Traditional Affairs (BTA), Vol. 1, Mphephu's Powers: Internal Political Situation, 1/237/3/3, 1989: 5; Khangala, 1990: 30-35; Khangala, 1999: 98-99; Khorommbi, 2001: 203-205; Maṭhagu, 1990: 31-40; Munthali, 2005: 30-31).

Mention has been made of the benefit accrued by Africans from foreign education, western medicinal system, Christianity and foreign attire that accompanied these changes (Musitha, interviewed on 1 July 2019). However, the current researcher would not wish to see this assertion divert from the essence of the impact that was inflicted by the 'accrued benefits' on the institution of *vhuhosi* in the process of 'civilisation', 'Christianisation', 'modernisation', the establishment of the 'reserves' and the subsequent 'homeland independence'. Therefore, inevitably the involvement of *mahosi* in the homeland system made the more marginalised voices of the rural communities to become victims of the negative impact of the native administration which transformed the institution of *vhuhosi* into a bureaucratised and uniform entity that was entangled in the state apparatus (Oomen, 2005: 19). To drive this point home Musitha (Interviewed on 1 July 2019) further asserts that this was a contradiction of power play or relationships. The current researcher sums this by positing that as symbols of communal existence and African values, *mahosi* increasingly enjoyed benefits outside the traditional tribute system and occupied seats in parliament while they descended into an identity crisis and dualism of governance: traditionalism and homeland governance.

Mamdani wisely says that the above scenarios were fostered by the "encounter and subsequent relationship between the powerful and the powerless, the dominators and the dominated, in which the former are able to set the rules of the game and in which the dice are heavily loaded" (Oomen, 2005: 15). This means that where traditionalism *vis-à-vis* *vhuhosi* and institutions were regarded as primitive, backward and undemocratic, the colonial powers saw the fruit of aligning it to their infamous racist and separatist homeland policy, within the rapidly modernising world wherein they wanted to change the rules of the game. This led to the gradual corrosion and erosion of communal life and the replacement thereof by capitalism and private ownership; the establishment of a new relationship between *mahosi* and their communities as well as within the internal relations of *vhuhosi* and institutions. This was another reason that Patrick Mphephu opted for a one-party state and thus inviting the descent into the rule by iron fist because by that time the 'die was cast' (Bantoe Tradisionale Sake (BTS)/ Bantu Traditional Affairs (BTA), Vol. 1, Mphephu's Powers: Internal Political Situation in Venda, 1/237/3, 1989: 9).

5.3 The Influence of the Homeland System on *Vhuhosi* Affairs

It cannot be argued against the fact that *vhuhosi* affairs were governed by customs and tradition especially when it came to the identification and confirmation of the successor to the throne in the event of the death of the incumbent (Khangala, 1999: 6). Van Warmelo (1949: 677 and 1027), Maluṭa (2013: 49) and Matshidze (2013: 142-145) corroborate Khangala's assertion that the processes of succession among Vhavenḁa revolved around the system of *dzekiso* wife, whose dowry is paid for by the father of the heir-apparent. Van Warmelo (1949: 1027) adds that this was in order to avoid experiences of the past where succession was frequently accompanied by bloodshed between the factions who supported the potential rival brothers such that: "The Venda institution of chieftainship knows no minor heir, whence it follows that there can be no regency, no guardianship and no trusteeship of estate." Together with the significance of the land to Vhavenḁa, as discussed earlier in the study, this forms part of the factors that influenced the changing nature of internal relations of *vhuhosi* and institutions discussed below. However, the current researcher selected a few examples for discussion since the landscape is practically littered with evidence.

5.3.1 The land question: Dispossession, forced removals, taxation and labour

The lesser the animosity between Aḽilali Mphephu and his half-brothers at the instigation of the white authorities, notably the white settlers at Schoemansdal, is mentioned the better in order to avoid unnecessary repetition. Of essence is that after 1899 the land was used by the settlers to further impact on the relationship between Aḽilali Mphephu and his brothers/ half-brothers, especially Kutama and Sinthumule who were rewarded for having sided with them against him between 1898 and 1899, the result being the breaking down of the Ramabulana kingdom (R 11201/99, CR. 5219/99. Translation. Extract. 8th August 1899: 1-3, 5-6; Report upon Locations for the chiefs Senthumula (sic Sinthumule), Mahimo (sic Maemu) and Kutama. Office of the Native Location Commission, 11 February 1907: 2-7). The enactment of the Natives Land Act of 1913 was also a strategic move on the part of the colonial powers, because although *mahosi* retained the responsibility to allocate the land they did not control it since they did so for the benefit of the white authorities: the land had lost its communal central essence. All these led to a new approach to the internal relations within *vhuhosi*

because the land was used as a determinant of these crucial relations (Prof. P.K. Chauke, Presentation on Manenzhe Land Claims, 03 July 2018; Thovhele T.A. Manenzhe, interviewed on 10 July 2018; Musiṭha, interviewed on 01 July 2019).

Omer-Cooper (1987: 159) encapsulates the above by saying that to ensure that enough African labour should be available, Africans were prevented from supporting themselves by independent agricultural activity. This is because the Natives Land Act of 1913 limited African land ownership in the reserves. As such some *mahosi* became victims of the system when they lost historical land. Resultantly, over the years the internal relations of *mahosi* were bereft of Africa/ Vhavenda value systems because the outcome was that this set the tone for white-influenced *vhuhosi* internal relations that were determined by the homeland policy as discussed below (Manenzhe, Interviewed 10 July 2018; VG, Report of Commission of Inquiry into Vhuhosi Affairs Part II, 5 July 1991: 49, 52 and 53).

5.3.1.1 The influence and relevance of Vhavenda maxims to the homeland system

It should be remembered that the land served as a trump card for *mahosi* in increasing their support base; hence “*khosi ndi khosi nga vhalanda*”. In essence the land served as a tool for internal relations within *vhuhosi* and institutions as well as power play relationships (Musiṭha, interviewed on 1 July 2019). The bigger the size of the land and that of the community determined the influence a *khosi* enjoyed on internal relations *vis-à-vis* lesser *mahosi*; which land was held communally in trusteeship for the community because private land ownership only became applicable after the subjugation of Alilali Mphephu when he lost control thereof (R 11201/99, CR. 5219/99. Translation. Extract. 8th August 1899: 1-3, 6; Nemudzivhadi, 1977: 15). Regardless of these changes, the land continued to be a centre-piece for power relations between the white powers and *mahosi* of Vhavenda on the one hand, and influenced the relations among *mahosi* themselves on the other. As such it became a source of protracted conflicts for a number of years before subjugation and a determinant of internal relations between created and collaborative *mahosi* (R 11201/99, CR. 5219/99. Translation. Extract. 8th August 1899: 1-3, 6). The land also influenced the relations among *mahosi*, the white authorities and the missionaries *vis-à-vis* resistance to tax collection for the state, the demarcation of the land for various purposes such

as for white farms, crown lands, 'reserves' and being excised for the Berlin Missionary Society (BMS) of Germany, the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC), Swiss Missionary Society (SMS), among others (BAO/BAD, 56/8/4/2, Part II, New File R206/2/6. Sitting of the Thohoyandou Territorial Authority, 1968: 5; Nǰou, 1993: 14-24; Nǰou, 2000: 25, 56, 74, 85 and 94; Halala, 2011: 153-200). Resultantly, it is also worth noting that according to African value systems we talk of tribute and not tax collection such that the introduction of taxation was a threat to the lifeblood that connected *mahosi* to their communities as well as communal life.

The second and third Vhaventxa maxims worth mentioning are "*vuhosi a vhu ambuwi, hu ambuwa vhuṅanga*" and/ or "*vuhosi a vhu pfukhi mulambo*" (Meij, 1976: 135; Van Warmelo, 1975: 13). The first one literally means that *vuhosi* cannot under any circumstances be transferred to another area unless if such situations are accompanied by the incumbent conquering and enlarging his territory. The second part of the same maxim declares that *vuhosi* is not like traditional healing which is practiced anywhere at anytime. The literal translation of the second maxim means that *vuhosi* status crosses no boundaries, meaning that whoever moves to another ruler's territory ceases to enjoy *vuhosi*. These maxims were applicable in situations where a ruler left his political domain, automatically abandoning *vuhosi* responsibilities and became a displaced person or a subject of another ruler. In this regard that would have happened when a ruler had fled from the threat of attack by more powerful neighbouring rulers or factions. It is the contention of the current researcher that these maxims cannot/ could not ring true in situations where individual rulers were forcibly removed from their political domains as a result of demarcation of farms and/ or the establishment of 'reserves' and be placed under other *mahosi*, who were 'preferentially' treated as a result of the homeland system. In such instances a newly created ruler would be imposed on the new arrivals, regardless of the fact that they were originally of an equivalent status with the imposed incumbent. The discussion below would like to dwell on such examples and how they determined and impacted on internal *vuhosi* relations.

5.3.1.2 The forced removal of Vatsonga from Venḁa and *ethnic* identity

While Maloka (1995: 2) and Redding (1996: 557) emphasize the essence of communalism *vis-à-vis* the land issue, in the same vein *mahosi* controlled its allocation

to newcomers and newly-wed men for farming and residential purposes. Nemapate (1998: 40-55) and Maluṭa (2013: 52-57) discuss the impact of forced removals and land dispossession. For one Nemapate focuses on the forced removals *vis-à-vis* the construction of Vhaventṣa and Vatsonga/ Machangana *ethnic* identity around 1969 to the 1970s. Maluṭa zoomed on the forced removals of the communities within Madimbo Corridor for the sole purpose of establishing white farms and a military camp between 1930 and 1982. During that era the north-eastern region of the Transvaal are (now north-eastern corner of Limpopo Province and/ or the Vhembe District Municipality (VDM) was predominantly occupied by Vhaventṣa and Vatsonga/ Machangana (Desmond, 1971: 181). The removal of Vatsonga/ Machangana from Vaventṣa and that of the communities of Madimbo Corridor happened with so much destruction of property without any form of compensation. This equally affected the tribute base as well as the communal nature related to African/ Vhaventṣa value systems. For example Musiṭha (Interviewed on 1 July 2019) mentioned that the Mhinga traditional community is presently settled on what is originally and historically *Khosi* Mphaphuli's jurisdictional area; so did Ralushai (Interviewed 21 July 2010).

In essence this also meant that the forced surrendering of the land by Vhaventṣa compromised the source of power, authority and legitimacy of *vhuhosi* and resulted in legitimacy crisis (Musiṭha, interviewed 1 July 2019). On the one hand it is the argument of the current researcher that on the one hand the power, authority and legitimacy of *mahosi* were as much sacrosanct and linked to the availability and access to land. This in turn formed a crucial element of the communal existence and lifeblood of *vhuhosi* and institutions as well as their communities. On the other the forced removals dented the historical harmonious relations that had existed for many years between Vhaventṣa and Vatsonga/ Machangana, because the homeland system inculcated negative *ethnic* sentiments among the two groups. It devalued the value of *Ubuntu/ vhuthu/ vunhu* due to the influence of the homeland ideology of *ethnic* 'othering' or 'otherness'.

5.3.1.3 The Manenzhe community's experience of forced removal

Historically the Manenzhe community had occupied the larger part of the area between the present Tshipise Forever Resort and Masisi, near the town of Musina. The area

produces large quantities of tomatoes within the VDM. Historically *Khosi* Manenzhe ruled with the assistance of 22 (twenty-two) *magota* of respective communities (Interview with *Khosi* Manenzhe, 10 July 2018; Presentation of Report of Manenzhe Land Claim by Prof. Chauke of the School of Agriculture and Rural Development, University of Venda, 3 July 2018). Unfortunately, the demarcation of white commercial farms in 1935 saw Manenzhe's land reduced in size and thus affected the number of *magota* under him, who were reduced to 15 (fifteen), while some members of the community members chose to scatter and relocate elsewhere under various *mahosi*: Rambuḁa, Tshivhase, Sinthumule, Ramabulana and Mphaphuli, among others.

Between 1942 and 1946 the Manenzhe community became a victim of more forced removals to a place called Tshipise-tsha-Dambale, further inflaming internal relations, as they were again placed under then elevated *Khosi* Tshikundamalema, whereat *Khosi* Manenzhe was downgraded to *vhugota*. One would argue that the dictum “*vhuhosi a vhu ambuwi...*” or “*vhuhosi a vhu pfukhi mulambo*”, was being applicable and at play (Maluta, interviewed 3 and 10 July 2018). However, it is the current researcher's contention that this would have proved true had the Manenzhes voluntarily subjected themselves under Tshikundamalema. On the contrary this was a forced incident and an imposition of Tshikundamalema on *vhuhosi* of Manenzhe to consolidate the status quo of the homeland policy. However, *Khosi* Manenzhe remained unfazed and resolutely refused to pay allegiance to *Khosi* Tshikundamalkema (Manenzhe, 10 July 2018), thus further impacting on internal relations. Manenzhe's efforts were rewarded when in 1966 through Proclamation of September 1966, *vhuhosi* was reinstated at new places around the same area of Mutale. However, this did not makethe Manenzhes to rest on their laurels as they steadfastly continued to claim for the restitution of the territory lost during forced removals and demarcation; which remains the focus of the Manenzhes. At the time of writing this study the land claim was still receiving focus from Manenzhe's council-of elders, Limpopo government researchers and officials (Manenzhe, Interview 10 July 2018; Maluta, Interview 3 and 10 July 2018; Presentation by Prof. Chauke; 2018).

5.3.1.4 Forced removals and the elevation of some *magota* into *vhuhosi*

Mahosi Tshikundamalema, Nethengwe, Makuya and Mutele, among others, were formerly *magota* until they were elevated to *vhuhosi* by Verwoerd around in in

accordance with the Bantu/ Black Authorities Act (Act No. 68 of 1951). This was with coupled with the recommendation of De Wet Nel, in order to increase the number of 'tribal' authorities and thus pave a way for the homeland self-government (VG. Report of Commission of Inquiry into Venda Vuhosi Affairs, Part I, 1990/91: 33; Van Warmelo, 1935: 55-56; Nemudzivhaqi, 1983: 28-29; Heroldt and Dombo, 1992: 72; Maluta, 2013: 50). These newly created/ elevated *mahosi* were eventually imposed on some of the communities who together with their own *mahosi* were forcibly removed from the Madimbo Corridor. In the first place according to African value systems *vuhosi* is not created or *magota* elevated into the status of *mahosi*: "*vuhosi vhu tou bebelwa*". According to Khangala (1999: 36) this undermined the traditional system and the prescripts of customary law of succession. Disappointingly, some *mahosi* did not oppose the process of *magota* being elevated to be their equals for fear of reprisals or losing their positions; the powers that be meted out such punishment against recalcitrant and non-collaborative *mahosi*. The result was that the elevation of created *mahosi* and the redrawing of territorial boundaries led to the division and reduction in the size of the land and thus affected various communities (VG. Part I, 1990/91: 33; Khangala, 1999: 36; Maluta, 2013: 50). This also affected political structures of some communities as they were forced to merge under these new *mahosi*; which automatically meant a demotion of existing *mahosi* to *vhugota* in the least, or even *vhukoma* in the worst case scenario, while they lost their land, the bone of their socio-economic livelihood and sentimental value (Maluta, 2013: 51-55).

To cement the above sentiments, Maloka (1995: 1) postulates about these created *mahosi* that: "Many of those laying claim to the status of 'traditional' leaders are nothing more than a former Bantustan petty bourgeoisie... chiefs as the creation and agents of colonialism". Simply put *vuhosi* was created so that *mahosi* were fashioned to promote the homeland policy. In contrast, within African/ Vhavenda value systems *vuhosi* was never a career but a respectable political, social, cultural and economic entity based on the maxims "*vuhosi vhu tou bebelwa*" and "*khosi ndi khosi nga vhalanda*". In this regard Redding (1996: 557) posits that in the pre-colonial period 'chiefs' had spiritual foundations for their rule. It is therefore also understandable that Maloka (1995: 1) further asserts that 'chiefs' cannot be isolated from the socio-economic organisation of the societies concerned as they were crucially linked to the history of their ancestral existence and African value systems that went with it.

5.3.1.5 *Khosi* Mashau and the establishment of Swiss Mission Station: The Maluleke community of Valdezia Mission versus Mashau community

Halala (2011: 204) quotes Majeke (2008: 1) who says: “If a ruling minority can enslave the mind of the people, control their ideas and the whole way of thinking, they have found an even more efficient weapon for subjugating them than the use of force, the military and the police. For then the people themselves, assist in their own enslavement.” This has much relevance to the change over time that beset the community and *Khosi* Mashau of Ha-Mashau, who fell victim to the arrival of the Swiss Missionaries in 1875 in what is today called Valdezia. Before this a famous hunter, one Joao Albasini, had immense influence over Vatsonga/ Machangana and they regarded him as their *hosi*. This changed with the eminent takeover of the leadership over Vatsonga/ Machangana by the Swiss missionaries (Van Warmelo, 1935: 90-91; Halala, 2011: 205). According to *Gota* Tshivhangwaho Griffith Mashau of Magweni village under Mashau Traditional Authority (Telephonic Interview, 25 July 2019) the community leader of Vatsonga/ Machangana at Valdezia was one Huhlwani Maluleke, also a go-between and messenger between his people and the Swiss missionaries (See also Halala, 2011: 99-100).

This raises a question of the existence of *vhuhosi* of Vatsonga/ Machangana at that particular point in time in the area of Ha-Mashau. Essentially as the mission community grew, so did *Khosi* Mashau’s land shrank in size as it was demarcated into farms: Klipfontein, Driefontein, Beaufort, Thorndale, Malmesbury and Welgevonden (originally called Lwalani by the Mashau community) and Goedehoop farms (Telephonic interview with *Gota* Griffith Mashau, 25 July 2019). *Gota* Khwara Nengwekhulu (Interview, 25 July 2019) of Bofulamaṭo village under Ngwekhulu Traditional Authority argues that during the arrival of the Swiss Missionaries around the same area the land belonged to Davhana, a half-brother of King Makhado and not Mashau. Be that as it may the arrival of the Swiss Missionaries affected the jurisdictional control and authority of either Mashau or Davhana, whatever the case maybe, and thus led to land dispossession while automatically destabilizing communal existence. The one scenario is that the size of the land was reduced on the part of the Mashaus as they lost Lwalani and the accompanying farms (whereat their ancestral graves are allegedly situated) and were forbidden to practice their traditional rituals, while Davhana was forced by the white authorities to relocate to Ngwekhulu location,

in the present Vuwani area (*Gota* Griffith Mashau, Interviewed 25 July 2019; *Gota* Khwara Nengwekhulu, Interviewed, 25 July 2019).

5.3.1.6 The removal of Shehe/ Ramaru Community from Shehe, present Elim

In a similar fashion the experience above resonates with that of the Ramaru community from the historic Shehe, the current Elim Hospital and Njhakanjhaka area and part of the land where the Valdezia community is situated (*Gota* Maanda Albert Ramaru, Interviewed, 22 July 2017, Thohoyandou). The Ramarus are currently living at newly established Ramaru village south-west of Elim. According to Ramaru the Shehe/ Ramaru community was forcibly removed to make way for the establishment of the hospital and later settlement of Njhakanjhaka who are Vatsonga/ Machangana community as part of the development of the homeland policy. This led to the destabilisation of the Shehe/ Ramaru community as they were forced to adhere to missionary style of living while they were discouraged from practising their tradition. In typical colonial fashion, *mahosi* in all mission farms systematically lost their political powers since the farm agents ultimately became more powerful than *mahosi* (Halala, 2011: 210). These farms are currently the subject of land claims that were lodged since 1998 by the Davhana, Mashau and Ramaru communities, the results of which have not yet been released (Halala, 2011: 305-306; *Gota* Maanda Albert Ramaru, Interviewed, 22 July 2017, Thohoyandou).

5.3.1.7 The imposition of Davhana in the land of the Nengwekhulus: The comedy of homeland policy of ‘independent headmanship’

After Davhana had gone through a military confrontation with his half-brother Makhado, the two smoked the peace pipe. However, Davhana had years earlier lost jurisdiction over his land and first fled to Ngwekhulu, the land of the Nengwekhulus, in 1877 after allegedly being forced to leave present Valdezia, whereafter he proceeded to Mphaphuli's and later Rammbuđa's area in search of refuge (Giesekke, 2004: 70; Van Warmelo, 1940: 39; Telephonic interview with *Gota* Khwara Nengwekhulu, 25 July 2019). During this time Nengwekhulu and Netshimbupfe were known as 'independent headmen'. The concept of 'independent headman', whatever it meant was quiet controversial. Van Warmelo (1935: 43) refers to it as *contradiction in adjecto* (contradiction in terms) and says that these persons were regarded as *mahosi* amongst black South Africans by the white authorities. In fact Van Warmelo (1935:

120) refers to Nengwekhulu as a 'chief'. According to African/ Vhavenda values systems a *gota* could have not been 'independent' as such a position is/ was always under a *khosi*. Secondly, being 'independent' would imply that such an individual was indeed a *khosi* such that the designation of 'independent headman' could have been a ploy to demean the position and automatically demote the incumbent for non-collaboration and thus replace them with a more favourable and collaborative one.

Delving deeper into Nengwekhulu's history would explain his ultimate designation as a *gota*. The Nengwekhulu history is full of a kaleidoscope of resistance to white domination. This includes the imposition of Davhana as a *khosi* of the Nengwekhulus in their own original area of jurisdiction, Ngwekhulu (Van Warmelo, 1940: 63; Nemudzivhadi, 1977: 39; Interview with Ralushai, 12 July 2010, University of Venda; *Gota Khwara Nengwekhulu*, Interviewed 25 July 2019). In all the sources on the history of *vuhosi* of Vhavenda consulted, there is no historical evidence of Davhana having gone to war against Nengwekhulu or ever having attacked, defeated and subjugated the latter, except that the former had fled from his half-brother Makhado to Ngwekhulu (Van Warmelo, 1940: 39; Giesecke, 2004: 70. See also, Nemudzivhadi, 1985: 15). It suffices to say that Davhana was imposed on the Nengwekhulus by the homeland system around 1958, the latest: a further indictment on the interference by the system in matters of *vuhosi*, this after Netshimbupfe having pleaded with Nengwekhulu to show hospitality to Davhana. It is also a historical fact that the white authorities had always had a soft spot for Davhana, if the incident around his animosity with his half-brother Makhado, and the help he received from the white authorities and Joao Albasini, are anything to go by (Nemudzivhadi, 1977: 12). A report of the Commission of Inquiry into Venda Vuhosi Affairs Part II confirms that when Davhana relocated to Ngwekhulu he was also an 'independent headman' and only became a *khosi* after the creation of the Davhana Territorial Council, thereby placing Nengwekhulu below him as a *gota* (VG, 1991: 53-54. See also Vhembe Archives, 19-07-2007: 2-7).

A report from the Office of the Limpopo Regional Land Claims Commission (LRLCC) found that the Nengwekhulus did not experience dispossession of land rights but were made to fall under Davhana's jurisdiction (Office of the Limpopo Regional Land Claims

Commission, 2011: 5). Added to this acting-*Gota* Nengwekhulu Mandela Wilson⁴⁰ (Interviewed in T̄hohoyandou on 17 September 2017) and *Gota* Khwara Telephonic interview with *Gota* Khwara Nengwekhulu, 25 July 2019) emphasised that the Nengwekhulus did not dispute Davhana's *vuhosi* status, but that he was exercising his authority on their ancestral land, Ngwekhulu. Mandela Wilson added that the Nengwekhulus were victims of apartheid's forced removals that were assisted by De Wet Nel, the former Commissioner-General of Vhavenda. Based on these statements, the current researcher concludes that the loss of jurisdiction was as much the loss to land rights and dispossession by the Nengwekhulus and an imposition of Davhana on their socio-political organisation.

5.3.1.8 The Masakonas assume jurisdictional authority over Magoro family

According to historical evidence the Magoro family were originally *mahosi* alongside other such individuals as Masakona, Nthabalala, Mashau, and Mashamba, among the south-eastern Vhavenda (Schapera, 1966: 65; Van Warmelo, 1935: 121; Van Warmelo, 1940: 54; Phophi, n.d: 14). Magoro ruled from the hill of Magoro also referred to as Mbwenda, an area which fell under T̄hohoyandou's rule (as discussed in chapter two of this study) where he had been posted as one of sub-rulers as part of the latter's policy of aggrandisement. The white man's name for Magoro was Kwaggafontein (VG, 1991: 49). Anthropological and Archaeological studies conducted by Boeyens (2011: 12-14) also confirm the Magoro settlement at Mbwenda, also referring to it as Magoro Hill. As indicated elsewhere some *mahosi* would then be designated as 'independent headmen', lose their original status and thus becoming junior to their former equals. Hartman, Kriel, Boonzaaier, Els and Wassermann (1993: 20-21) define regional authorities as those bodies comprising *mahosi* of two or more 'tribal' authorities. In this regard Magoro appears as one of the members of the Groot Spelonken Regional Authority, the building block of the T̄hohoyandou Territorial Authority, together with such *mahosi* as Molema (sic Mulima), Ramokgopa, Mamaila and Machaka, amongst others, further proof of his original status as a *khosi* (Thohoyandou Territorial Authority, Sibasa, 12th-16th October 1964: n.p.).

⁴⁰ At the time of research and writing of this report Nengwekhulu Mandela Wilson was still an acting *gota* on behalf of the aspiring successor to the Nengwekhulu throne, Zoitwa Nengwekhulu. Mandela was interviewed on 17 April 2017, T̄hohoyandou.

According to Phophi (n.d.: 16) Magoro lost his status during the period from the 1954/5 to 1962 forced removals from Mbwenda to a new area, present Magoro. However, thereupon a certain Native Commissioner by the name of Swart arrived with one Rasikhuthuma Masakona in 1958 and declared that from that instance going forward the same Masakona would be a new *khosi* over the Magoros. Resultantly this implied that the then incumbent *Khosi* Eric Magoro, was from that moment demoted to be a *gota* under Masakona. Before this Magoro had been reigning over a combination of Vhavenda, Basotho and Vatsonga/ Machangana. *Gota* Namadzavho Amos averred that because they were in a minority numerically as compared to the Masakona community they were placed under *Khosi* Masakona in terms of the Bantu Authorities Act of 1951 (interviewed on 22 July 2017). Sigwavhulimu Edwin Magoro (Secretary of Magoro Royal Council, Interviewed 22 July 2017) added that the Masakonas were victims of forced removals and that they have not only lost their status of *vhuhosi* but their subjects, *magota* and jurisdictional rights over Magoro area (*Gota* Namadzavho Amos Magoro and Sigwavhulimu Edwin Magoro, Interviewed 22 July 2017; Phophi, n.d.: 16; Schapera, 1966: 65. See also VG Part II, 1991: 49-50; Ralushai Commission, 1996: 589-590; Request by Headman Namadzavho Amos Magoro for restoration to the rank of chief, 24 September 1991: n.p.; Application for recognition as a *khosi* of Magoro tribe, 6 January 1995: n.p.). Post-1994 to date *Gota* Namadzavho Amos Magoro remains a headman under *Khosi* Masakona. *Gota* Namadzavho Amos even fanaticised that should they realise their dream of being restored to their original status of *khosi* all those members of Magoro clan scattered throughout South Africa would be invited to converge to Mbwenda; although their current population number is a mere 300 (three hundred) headcount. This evidence of years of frustration, desperation, victimisation and scattering as a result of the homeland policy as well as oppression by their own, especially considering that Magoro was once one of Thohoyandou's lieutenants. The discussion below focuses on the challenge of the homeland system to the customary law of succession.

5.4. The Challenge of Respecting the Essence of Customary Law of Succession

Succession to *vhuhosi* of Vhavenda is ascribed by the customary law of succession that had been laid down from generation to generation, having been accepted and respected from time immemorial by the royal family, the council-of elders and the

community; and wherein the successor to the throne must be the first born son of the *dzekiso* wife (Meij, 1976: 145; Matshidze, 2013: 44). The *dzekiso* wife is the wife who has been married by the proceeds from the marriage of the potential heir's sister which were provided to him by incumbent father. The *dzekiso* wife remains the senior wife in status regardless of at what point she would have been married, even if she would have been married after whatever number of wives of the incumbent, as part of Vhavenḁa value systems. Wilhelm (1998: 66) explains traditional values as those that are related to the community to be served (quoted from Cole, 1990: 8-10). The same author (1998: 66) further argues that such values should be honoured and used as long as there is no direct conflict with the scripture as they are essential if we are to know the way a people see their world and what they consider to be real.

Oomen (2005: 18-19) contends that if the customary law officially recognised under apartheid could be considered as created in dialogue as an outcome of negotiation, then two parties occupied the front seats at the 'negotiating table', the Department of Native Affairs (DNA) and *mahosi*, *alas* not as equal partners. The current researcher would also like to argue that it was demeaning if not derogatory for the powers that be to assume responsibility on matters African and thus discuss them by partenistically recognising customary law which had been the realm of Africans and/ or Vhavenḁa for generations. Therefore the presumed recognition of individuals by virtue of their contribution to the "divide and rule" policy, and the creation of *vhuhosi* was as good as *mahosi* selling the soul of their people and betraying the value systems that they were supposed to espouse. In the words of Mamdani (Oomen, 2005: 19) "chieftancy was crucially hooked up to the mode of domination in the apartheid state"; and as such this practice set the tone for internal relations within *vhuhosi* of Vhavenḁa in a homeland.

That being said, Government Gazette of the Republic of South Africa, vol. 456 (2003: 5) encapsulates *vhuhosi* and institutions as the institution that derives its mandate and primary authority from applicable customary laws and practices; enhance tradition and culture; promote harmony and peace amongst its people; and promote an efficient, effective and fair dispute resolution system. Government Gazette (2003: 5-7) and Limpopo Traditional Leadership and Institutions Act (LTLIA) (Act 6 of 2005: 5) also make mention of the practice of *khosipfareli* ('regent'). This is contradicted by Van Warmelo (1949: 1027-1032) according to whom *vhuhosi* knew no minor heir and

therefore no regency to avoid regents overstaying their presence when the heir apparent had come of majority age; which situation would thus degenerate into disputes as indicated in Delius, Maggs, and Schoeman (2001: 45). Be that as it may the current researcher argues that the application of the system of regency is a foreign concept that was introduced with the imposition of the Westminster system and is therefore against African value systems; which has become an influence on post-1994 *vhuhosi* (See Government Gazette (2003: 5-7) and the LTLIA (2005: 5).

To strengthen this Omer-Cooper (1987: 194) advances that within the homeland system the rights of Africans were “expressed predominantly through the re-invigorated system of traditional ‘chiefs’ but under ultimate white control.” Nemudzivhaḡi (2017: 68-69) further points out that colonial powers even went to the extent of identifying 38 (thirty-eight) so-called *mahosi* in a country which originally had only five senior rulers whereas the other 33 (thirty-three) customarily fell under the five whose status had been lowered, such that they were eventually on the same level: *thovhele* and *mahosimahulu* had become *mahosi*. According to Nemudzivhaḡi (2017: 68-69) this misunderstanding of Vhavenḡa political custom gave rise to the conclusion by some authors that Venḡa consisted of ‘independent’ *mahosi*. The same author adds that this practice contradicted political customs of Vhavenḡa; evidence of entrenchment of hindrance and interference into the hierarchy which represented internal relations.

According to Wilhem (1998: 49) traditionally the ‘tribal’ leadership, in the image of the ‘chief’ represented the unity of the ‘tribe’ and was the personification of the law. In other words, the example of the *khosi* was expected to be emulated. However, the homeland policy myopically interfered with it by corrupting the institution of *vhuhosi* when the authorities made it a representation of salaried agents, whose stay in office was at the mercy of the apartheid government. Thus generally, the salaried agents who were *mahosi* were defended and protected by the powers that be against anybody who dared to challenge them (Redding, 1996: 556-557; Lonsdale, 2000: 12; Maloka, 1995: 1-5; Omer-Cooper, 1987: 194; Musiḡha, 2012: 43). In the words of Musiḡha (2012: 35. Also interviewed on 01 July 2019) these changes had a far-reaching impact on the ‘de-traditionalizing and de-legitimizing’ of this pre-colonial institution. Thus this descended into “a society of victims and beneficiaries, not just victims and

perpetrators... hence the ethnographic gaze has never really been absent from South Africa's polity, nor from its politics" (Mahmood Mamdani quoted by Fick July 13 to 19, 2018: 34). In order to consolidate these two assertions the current researcher borrowed the following extract by former Minister of Provincial Affairs and Local Government, Sidney Mufamaqi (Address to the National House of Traditional Leaders, 2001: 1 of 4):

The evil systems of colonialism and apartheid even severed this institution from the lifeblood of the people, including, in a number of instances where some amongst this leadership were seen as being opposed to the quest for freedom for their people.

According to Redding (1996: 557) the state retained as local administrators those 'chiefs' and 'headmen' who did not pose too much of a threat to its law and order during its abuse of what the maxims above stood for and the dispute resolution mechanisms that resided in the customary laws of succession. In line with the continuation of the policy objectives of colonialism, and apartheid after it, the responsibility to appoint the malleable *mahosi* resided in the 'chief minister' or 'paramount chief', who in the case of the 'RoV' happened to be Patrick Mphedu. Under him the essence of internal relations of *vuhosi* remained to use *mahosi* to entrench and consolidate the apartheid and homeland policy (Republic of Venda Constitution, 1979: 17, 24, 28). Examples of these argument follow below.

5.4.1 *Khosi* Ratshimphi Tshivhase versus Ratshialingwa Tshivhase

Khosi Frans Ratshimphi Tshivhase was the sixth ruler of Tshivhase dynasty after it broke away from the Masingo house of Dambanyika/ Dimbanyika following the mysterious disappearance of legendary Thohoyandou. He was the great-great-grandson of Raluswielo, the first ruler of Ha-Tshivhase, and he succeeded his father Ramaremisa as a *khosi* on 7 April 1930, after the rightful heir to the throne, one Sikhobidzhana, was disqualified following accusations of ritual murder (Phophi, 1989: 157-164; Nenguda, 1990: 6-7, 22; Dangale, 1993: 5-6, 83). Ratshimphi was a staunch opponent of white rule and likened himself to the "British Empire" because of his quest

to have a vast empire just like the British did during the era of imperialism. As a result he called “Mphaya” (apparently because of poor pronunciation), which put him on a collision course with the white authorities (Phophi, 1989: 19-25 and 1989: 165; Nemudzivhadi, 1985: 27; Nenguḁa, 1990: 23; ḁangale, 1993: 9).

Unlike his father Ramaremisa, who was favourable to missionary work because he saw its role and benefits for his people in education, Ratshimphi was against the establishment and spread of white influence in his area. He was also looked at as the most vicious and consistently drunken *khosi* in the Transvaal (Van Warmelo, n.d.: 11; Nenguḁa, 1990: 24; ḁangale, 1993: 9). It was as a result this negatively perceived personality of his by the white authorities of not allowing himself to roll over like a submissive man that made him the skunk among all *mahosi* of Vhavenda. To add salt to the wound Ratshimphi resisted the introduction of “betterment schemes”, inasmuch as he was against the establishment of local councils in his area. Contrarily his half-brother, one Ratshialingwa from one of Ramaremisa’s junior houses, had the ambition to become a *khosi* of Ha-Tshivhase and thus painted himself as one who was attracted to Christianity as well as a proponent of white policies; thereby endearing himself to the white authorities (Nemudzivhadi, 1985: 27; ḁangale, 1993: 9-10). Unsurprisingly when the authorities released Ratshimphi from his hereditary *vhuhosi* responsibilities in 1946 due to his recalcitrance, he was deported to Hamanskraal, near Pretoria, whereafter in November of the same year his half-brother Ratshialingwa was appointed as his replacement (SA URU 2353 1921 Acts of misconduct, Folio 432. Afdanking van Ratshimphi Sibasa (sic Tshivhase) as hoof van die Vhavenda stam te Sibasa, Tengwe en Tonondo lokasies. Distrik Zoutpansberg weens slegte gedrag en aanstelling van Ratshialingwa Tshivhase in sy plek; Nemudzivhadi, 1985: 27; Phophi, 1989: 173-184; Nenguḁa, 1990: 26; ḁangale, 1993: 9-10).

These developments of deposing Ratshimphi because of his strong beliefs in tradition were a violation of African value systems and customary law of succession which were premised thereupon in the extreme. Ratshimphi did not in any way wrong his own people and his removal was not sanctioned by *makhadzi* and the inner-circle. This also signalled the diversion of *vhuhosi* from the ruling lineage at the behest of white interference and set the tone of white-authority influenced internal relations of *vhuhosi*. It is worth noting the specific wording in the report (SA URU, above), “afdanking”,

which actually means “resigning from or relinquishing of”. In the first place within Vhavenda value systems there is no such thing as resigning from one’s *vuhosi* responsibilities unless under rare circumstances where one is removed and banished by the royal family. This is actually a very rare occasion since an individual ruled at the behest of the checks-and-balances enshrined in the accepted unwritten laws. Secondly it was the white authorities who had deposed Ratshimphi because of his stance against colonialism and not because he relinquished his *vuhosi* responsibilities.

Be that as it may the death of Ratshialingwa in 1963 opened a window of opportunity for the legitimate and rightful lineage of Ratshimphi to restore to *vuhosi* when his son Thohoyandou Prince Tshivhase, the father of the current *khosi* of Ha-Tshivhase, Midiyavhathu Prince Kennedy, ascended the throne in October of the same year. Unfortunately, he ruled for only 929 days and died in 1966 in a motorcar accident (Nemudzivhaḁi, 1968: 134-142; Nemudzivhaḁi, 1985: 28-29; Phophi, 1989: 185-188; Nenguḁa, 1990: 36). There is contestation regarding the exact date of Prince’s death. On the one hand in two of his sources Nemudzivhaḁi (1968: 134) cites 12 May 1966 and again 12 May 1966 (1985: 29), while Phophi (1981: 25) on the other hand mentions 21 May 1966. Be that as it may his son and successor’s ascension to the throne as a minor in 1970 was followed by a controversial roller coaster ride of a tug-of-war for the regency between his ‘half-uncles’ Alfred Aḁidzulwi Tshivhase and one John Shavhani Tshivhase, who Alfred Aḁidzulwi had preferred to fill the vacuum instead of the rightful and legitimate successor (Nemudzivhaḁi, 1985: 29; Nenguḁa, 1990: 40; ḁangale, 1993: 23-4). One would not be faulted to conclude that Alfred Aḁidzulwi had ambitions to the throne of Ha-Tshivhase. This led to another theatre of contestation for *vuhosi* with Patrick Mphephu occasionally switching his support between the two regents from 1970 to 1988 on the one hand and the aspirant successor on the other. What followed was a series of court battles and court interdicts between the Ha-Tshivhase subjects on the one hand supporting the heir apparent and John Shavhani and Alfred Aḁidzulwi on the other until the rightful successor won the day and was finally and permanently installed on 10 July 1993 (Nenguḁa, 1990; 40-44; ḁangale, 1993: 71-74, 91-101). The interference by the white authorities and Patrick Mphephu in the matters of succession the Tshivhase dynasty is another example of idiotic and extreme violation of customary law.

5.4.2 The Sinthumule succession saga, 1939-1942: Piet Dzhombere

Sinthumule versus his half-brother George Mukhudwana Sinthumule

The succession saga of within the Sinthumule family between 1939 and 1941 is of well-known controversy within the succession history of Vhavenda, and the Ramabulana dynasty in particular. It smacks also of all the hallmarks of colonial and/or apartheid homeland policies' use of its ethnologists' interference, Van Warmelo particularly in this regard, and the Department of Native Affairs (DNA) in deciding on succession matters of Vhavenda (The Additional Native Commissioner, Louis Trichardt. Ref. 23 No.73/55, 1955: n.p.). It is a well-known fact that Vhavenda succession process follows customary law of succession wherein the status of *dzekiso* wife is sacrosanct and in which the role of *makhadzi* and *khotsimunene* is of crucial importance (Matshidze, 2013: 142-154). Ramabulana (1989: 26, quotes Van Warmelo's "Ethnological Report, n.d" where he claims that: "According to Venda tradition, unless the chief nominates his heir while still alive, the heir to the throne should be the son of the wife married by *dzekiso*." In the first place according to Vhavenda custom the *khosi* cannot nominate a successor to the throne. Thereofre, for Ramabulana, who is/ was of royal blood to uncritically quote Van Warmelo is mind-boggling. Secondly, the current researcher would like to point out that juxtaposing the nomination of a successor against the essence of customary law of succession defeats the tenets of African/ Vhavenda value systems and the essence of marrying a *dzekiso* wife: to raise the seed for a potential successor to the incumbent in future. Thridly, the nomination of a successor by a *khosi* would be derogatory to Vhavenda value systems on which customary law of succession is premised. Similarly *Khosi* Sinthumule Ramabulana himself was a beneficiary of a creation of *vuhosi* by the colonial authorities when he sided with them against Alilali Mphephu.

Flowing from above, Van Warmelo (Ethnological Report, n.p) refers to an undated and unpublished "will" that *Khosi* Sinthumule allegedly wrote just before he died in 1939, wherein he allegedly nominated George Mukhudwana (born of wife number four) as his successor ahead of Piet Dzhombere Sinthumule (born of wife number three), on the grounds that George Mukhudwana was better educated and a Christian (VG, Vuhosi Affairs Part II, 1990/1: 2). The influence of white missionaries and ethnologists cannot be ignored in this regard. While it is not the place of the current researcher to argue about who of the two sons should have succeeded Sinthumule, in the first place

the report, and most significantly the 'will' in question puts the sacrosanct role of customary law of succession *vis-à-vis* the *dzekiso* wife, the role of *makhadzi*, *khotsimunene* and the inner-circle of the Sinthumule royal family within the homeland policy under the spotlight (Matshidze, 2013: 142-154). The fact that in the said source by Van Warmelo the word will is depicted inverted commas ("will") further beggars its authenticity (Van Warmelo, n.d: 2). To further pave the way for George Mukhudwana's ascendance to the Sinthumule throne, Piet Dzhombere was even accused of having consorted with one of his father's younger wives is/ was regarded as debauchery, an act that is/ was punishable by disinheritance. Therefore in this regard whether Piet Dzhombere had committed the said offence, the responsibility to attend to the same matter and come to a decision on such matters should be within the realm of the royal family and not the white authorities or ethnologists (See Matshidze, 2013).

However, even if Sinthumule might have written a "will" such a "will" could not have superseded the customary law of succession to expedite the succession process in line with Vhavenḁa value systems. Be that as it may Piet Dzhombere ascended the throne in 1939 at the behest of *makhadzi* and the inner-circle but was deposed soon thereafter and replaced by his half-brother George Mukhudwana in 1941. An added reason for his removal was because he was allegedly accused of refusing to cooperate with agricultural officials, whereas in contrast the said "will" declared that he was a heathen, uneducated and rowdy; hence unworthy of the throne. Resultntly, Piet Dzhombere was demoted to *vhugota* and had a village demarcated for him at Tshirolwe in the Nzhelele area; where his lineage continues in that status to date (Nemudzivhadi, 1085: 27; Van Warmelo, n.d. See also SA GG 1191 50/1693. Minute 50/1693 dd. 1942.10.13 from Governor-General to lawyers Hellman and Baker in Johannesburg; Khangala, 1999; "Appointment of Chief George Senthumula", 4 Feb. 1941: 1-2; The Additional Native Commission, Louis Trichardt, no. 73/55, 1955: n.p.). The current researcher concludes that this was another classical example of the powers that be undermining the customs and traditions of Vhavenḁa, and the Ramabulana dynasty in particular, as enshrined in their value systems. It was also an irresponsible interference in the traditional processes, such that this impacted on Sinthumule internal relations of *vhuhosi*. Perhaps the passage below can assist in driving the current researcher's argument home based on the quotation from "Additional Native Commissioner, 'Sinthumule Chieftainship'" (1942: 1):

Chief Mphephu came to my office shortly after the installation of George as chief. He proceeded to tell me that he and other the Venda Chiefs in this area disapproved of the Government's decision and maintained that Piet was the man who should correctly have been appointed Chief. He added that the Venda Chiefs had agreed that in future they would never nominate their successors for they regarded the late Chief Sinthumule's action in nominating George as contrary to their custom and an objectionable precedent which they declined to follow.

Therefore the current researcher believes that this passage vindicates the argument of this study about the sacrosanctity of Africa/ Vhavenda value systems in succession procedures and thus opines that the interference by the government officials impacted grossly on Sinthumule internal relations. After the death of George Mukhudwana on 13 December 1950, a paternal uncle, Jonathan Sinthumule was unceremoniously issued with a certificate by the white authorities to act as a *khosi*, whereafter in 1976 he was again surprisingly appointed a permanent *khosi* of the Sinthumule dynasty by Patrick Mphephu, without consulting the royal family; a further violation of Vhavenda value systems (VG, Vhuhosi Affairs, 1990/91: 2-6). The Sinthumule royal family has been rocked by internal tensions over the throne ever since, which have seen the incumbent lineage being challenged by Piet Dzhombere's progenies in every Commission on *vuhosi* disputes and claims that have been set up by the Limpopo Provincial Government and the National Government alike since the dawn of democracy: Ralushai (1996-1998), Nhlapo (2004-2010) and Kgatla (2012-2017). In addition, the fact that Patrick Mphephu himself had complained about the wrongful processes that were followed during the installation of George Mukhudwana in 1940/1, further vindicates the current researcher's argument.

5.4.3 Makuya versus Makuya: Tension over succession to *vuhosi*

The crux of this matter is that the Makuyas were of *vhugota* status at Ha-Makuya, under Mphaphuli Traditional Authority, until after the death of Tshikalange Makuya in 1957, when Ngigideni Carel/ Karel Makuya succeeded him as a *gota*. However, in 1958 Verwoerd promoted Ngigideni Carel to the 'mouth-watering' status of *khosi*,

which promotion did not nullify the status of *vhugota* of the Makuya family that his predecessors had occupied before (VG. Report of Commission of Inquiry into Venda Vuhosi Affairs, Part I, 1990/91: 33; Maluța, 2013: 50). Ngigideni Carel was later challenged by his detractors within the Makuya family on the grounds that the *vuhosi* position was a family inheritance regardless of it having started with him after his elevation. They claimed that the whole family deserved the status of *vuhosi* and that one Musuthu John Makuya (from Tshikalange's third house) was the rightful and legitimate successor who should have ascended the newly created *vuhosi* instead. On the other hand Tshikalange's sixth and alleged *dzekiso* house, from where Ngigideni Carel was born, discarded the claim on the basis that the status of *vuhosi* was created for and started with him and was therefore not for the entire Tshikalange lineage: their status was that of *vhugota* (Madzanga Walter Makuya, Musuthu John's grandson, interviewed on 22 July 2017; Mtshetweni Ronald Makuya, incumbent *khosi*, son of Ngigideni Carel and respondent, interviewed on 22 July 2017). Equally Ngigideni Carel's detractors further claimed that one Tshifularo, who was the former's mother was Tshikalange's half-sister and therefore Ngigideni Carel could not qualify to be the legitimate successor of *Gota* Tshikalange Makuya (Minutes at Native Commissioner's Office: Re.: Makuya Tribe, 3-10-1957: n.p.).

In the same breadth Phophi (1991: 12) writes that regardless of Tshifularo having been Ngigideni Carel's half-sister, she had been married as wife number six and as a *dzekiso* wife by Tshikalange, for the sole purpose of raising as seed of the future successor to the throne. The same minutes cited in the paragraph above attest to the fact that although Tshifularo was a half-sister, she was indeed married as *dzekiso* to raise the seed of the future successor, Ngigideni Carel, for fear that in the absence of a legitimate and rightful successor *Khosi* Mphaphuli, to whom the family paid allegiance, would influence the succession process since Tshikalange's wife number four had been married from the family of one *gota* of Mphaphuli Traditional Authority at a village called Tshififi; however not as a *dzekiso* wife (The Makuya People at Native Commissioners Office: Sibasa, 17-10-1957: n.p.).

Meanwhile Musuthu John had been disqualified from succession because his mother was allegedly not a *dzekiso* wife (Phophi, 1991: 11). Aggravating Musuthu John's position was the fact that he was allegedly a well-known drunkard, had no elementary

schooling and was quarrelsome as opposed to Ngigideni Carel who had attended school up to standard six and was employed (Chief Native Commissioner Pietersburg: Succession- Late Headman Tshikalange Makuya, 25 October 1957: n.p.). Although the report of the Ralushai Commission (1996: 495) argued that Ngigideni Carel could not have been the legitimate successor because his mother was his father's half-sister and thus not a *dzekiso* wife, such a family arrangement is possible under certain, desperate and compelling circumstances, especially if the inner-circle had given the process its blessings (Chief Native Commissioner Pietersburg: Succession- Late Headman Tshikalange Makuya, 25 October 1957: n.p.). Therefore although customary laws of succession are a valuable vehicle for internal relations and dispute resolution, they are liable to be adapted where circumstances dictate. Although customary laws of succession may appear similar, special and/ or desperate circumstances in respective families may call for special and/ or desperate solutions in line with African/ Vhavenda value systems: this may apply for specific family decisions and/ or resolutions. Be that as it may the current researcher would like to reiterate and emphasise that the promotion of any *khosi* by the white government was anti-African/ Vhavenda values. This also shows the incessant manner in which the powers that be were arrogantly and unashamedly undermining these value such that they have become a recipe for tension-infested internal relations within *vuhosi* of Vhavenda to date. Lastly, the current researcher would like to reiterate that it is not the place of this study to determine who between Mtshetweni Ronald and Musuthu John, is the legitimate and rightful person to ascend the throne.

5.4.4. 'President' Frank Ravele's promotion of *magota* to *vuhosi*

Upon assuming the position of 'president' of the 'RoV' after the death of Patrick Mbulaheni Mphephu Ramabulana in 1988, his successor Frank Ravele later appointed a Commission of Inquiry into *vuhosi* of Vhavenda (Commission of Inquiry into Venda Vuhosi (VG) Part I: 17 Feb. 1989), which recommended Ravele's elevation to *vuhosi* of Mauluma (1989: 159-190), among other three such individuals, this under Mphephu Local Council. The other three were N.H. Musekwa of Ha-Musekwa, C.M. Mphephu of Vuvha and T.T. Ramabulana of Ha-Maelula (T.T. was a former minister in Patrick Mphephu's cabinet during homeland 'independence' and his half-brother) (VG Part I, 1989: 13-38, 56-71 and 104-119; Heroldt and Dombo, 1992: 84-85;

Thohoyandou, 22 September 1989). It should be evident at this point in time that, regardless of dynastic connections to the Ramabulana dynasty, it is questionable why Ravele waited for his turn to be 'president' to manipulate the system and elevate himself and others to *vuhosi*, ironically all members were agnatically linked to the Mphephu/ Ramabulana Royal Family. One would have thought that as a cousin and Finance Minister during Patrick Mphephu's tenure, Ravele could have used his proximity to the former to expedite the process of his elevation to *vuhosi* of Mauluma. In any event Ravele's elevation during Patrick Mphephu's life-time would not have been a challenge to the senior status of the Ramabulana house in any way: 'President' Patrick Mphephu was '*khosikhulu*' or 'paramount chief' and had the way-with-all in matters of *vuhosi*. In fact Ravele's elevation could have served to embolden the power and authority of the same house politically. By using his position as 'president' at the time to expedite the process while claiming to be a traditionalist, Ravele had denigrated his own family's value systems.

5.5. The Question of the Place of *Vuhosi* and Institutions in the Democratic South Africa: The New Constitution and Internal Relations

It is the observation of the current researcher that the period after the release of Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela in February 1990 was quite euphoric and driven by 'Mandelaphoria', for lack of a better word, especially for victims of the homeland policy. Within this conundrum was the fact that the same leadership of the ANC had previously vilified *mahosi* for the obvious reasons discussed in the preceding chapters (Lemon, 1987: 330-332; Rugege, 1990: 165, quoting from Mbeki, 1964). Rugege (1990: 165) quotes CONTRALESA's Chief Mhlabunzima Maphumulo who says: "...in South Africa, the institution of chiefs was regarded as an extension of the regime... as surrogates of the government." (See also Lemon, 1989: 330-332).

However, the ANC saw the red-light flashing such that regardless of its tainted image the organisation needed the support of *vuhosi* and institutions after years of apartheid and the homeland system to mobilise the rural masses to rally around the slogan "ANC leads, ANC lives" (Musitha, interviewed on 1 July 2019. See also Mbeki, 1964). The current researcher senses a degree of political brinkmanship on the part of the ANC which after years of the struggle for liberation during which some *mahosi* participated

in unflinchingly, had loathed the institution due to the homeland system. Whereas in the past the apartheid government had used *mahosi* to make the homeland policy a success, the ANC hoped to draw them closer for the sole purpose of ascertaining that the homelands collapse and a new order is established (Musitha, interviewed on 1 July 2019). This in itself set the tone of a new wave of internal relations because there were those who prayed for the demise of the oppressive homeland system while others still wanted the continuation of the same (Musitha, Interviewed on 1 July 2019; Heroldt and Dombo, 1992: 86). Therefore *vhuhosi* and institutions were caught in the middle to say the least.

Adding to this political excitement of the post-release Mandela period and anxiety was a flurry of scholarly research on the subject of the place and role of *vhuhosi* and institutions in post-apartheid South Africa. The argument within some of the sources focused mainly on the place, role and function of *mahosi* in the new dispensation (Buthelezi, 1997; Bekker, 1991 and 1993; Holomisa, 1994; Hlengwa, 1994; Botha, 1994; Boshielo, 2001; Skweyiya, 1993; Parnell, 2002; Nthai, 1994; Khosa and Muthien, 1998; Keulder, 1998; Mokgoro, 1994; Maloka, 1995). The current researcher cites Desmond (1971: 35) who avers that the government obtained an apparent acquiescence from its only African spokesmen, the 'chiefs', who were often reviled as stooges of Government and self-seeking characters. Regardless of this the objective of the ANC remained focused "at the mobilization of the rural communities, so that the rural masses are in fact politicized as they knew exactly what was happening" (Rugege, 1990: 168, quoting CONTRALESA's Chief Maphumulo). Therefore by the time of the release of the Interim Constitution (1993: 65 of 156) it was clear that within the negotiations there was great focus on the role of *mahosi* and their relationship with the soon to be reformed local government on the one hand and the significance of having to establish Provincial Houses of Traditional Leaders as well the National Council of Provinces on the other (See also The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996: 93; Draft White Paper on Traditional Leadership and Governance, October 2002: 17; Rugege, 1990: 149).

In its “Constitutional Guidelines for a Democratic South Africa” issued in 1988 the ANC addressed the form of the future South African state by declaring that: “The institution of hereditary rulers and chiefs shall be transformed to serve the interest of the people as a whole in conformity with the democratic principles embodied in the constitution” (Rugege, 1990: 166). However, reminiscent of the practice of the previous government to create and recognise *mahosi*, in 1994 the power to appoint *mahosi* was assigned to the Premier of the Northern Province, now Limpopo Province, within which the territory Venda falls, ironically still the application of the apartheid Black Administration Act of 1927, Proclamation R110 of 1957, the Venda Traditional Leadership Proclamation 21 of 1991 and the Venda Districts and Territorial Council Act of 1986 (A Draft Discussion Document towards a White Paper, 11 April 2000: 27). During one media statement then Minister Sydney Mufamadi of the DPLG (Media Statement, Friday, 14 June 2001: 1) stated that one had to understand and take into account the history and complexities surrounding the role and function of institutions of *vhuhosi* in a democracy. In another media statement (14 December 2001: 1) the Minister averred that under apartheid, local government was structured to divide citizens socially, economically, spatially and racially to ensure that only a small minority of South Africans benefited from development. Be that as it may this shows that the umbilical cord that joins (ed) any government to *vhuhosi* made the institution indispensable to socio-political development.

5.6 Conclusion

By focusing on the impact of the homeland policy on the internal relations within *vhuhosi* the current researcher departed from such internal relations before the establishment of the homeland policy; with the view to adjudicate the difference that could have emanated after the implementation of the policy. The study found that internal relations were governed by the powers of *mahosi* to control land allocation as well as familial relations such that this strengthened *mahosi's* hand in influencing such relations. However, it became evident throughout the argument of this chapter that other factors came to play as a result of the influence of the homeland policy. This included the implementation of a one-party state within the Venda homeland and the

morphing of Patrick Mphephu into a 'president for life' which resultantly gave him the upper hand in as far as the manipulation and influencing of the process of appointing *mahosi* as well as the application of customary laws of some royal families was concerned.

The study also found that during the demarcation of Aḷilali Mphephu's land for the purpose of establishing white commercial farms which was accompanied by the forced removals suffered by some communities and *mahosi*, many people and their respective *mahosi* became victims of the homeland system. These *mahosi* were either demoted to headmanship, lost control of their land and had their communities placed under other *mahosi* because of their non-collaborative stance. In the same breadth the study made reference to some important Vhavenḡa maxims on *vhuhosi* which also determined and/ or influenced internal relations within *vhuhosi* and institutions to drive the point home. It was also within this discussions that the current researcher found that the white authorities, and the homeland authorities after them, made it their responsibility to manipulate the succession process of individual royal families while simultaneously violating their customary laws of succession. In the study the current researcher also found that some individuals would be replaced by their brothers and/ or half-brothers for the mere fact that they opposed the imposition of the oppressive and segregation programmes of the colonial and apartheid regimes such as "betterment schemes" and taxation. This in most cases led to the diversion of *vhuhosi* from legitimate lineages and further inflamed tensions within the affected royal families; which tensions are still felt to date.

The study further identified a few examples to indicate how the related forced removals suffered by various communities and individuals victimised them such that some cases still remain in the realm of either the Limpopo Regional Land Claims Commission (LRLCC) and/ or a number of Commissions of Inquiry into *vhuhosi* disputes and claims. This followed instances where certain royal families were either demoted or placed under some royal families that were designated as controversial "independent headmen", and later promoted to *vhuhosi* because they were obeisance. It is also worth noting that iron within the same conundrum the 1994 political arrangement ironically adopted a number of legislation that were drafted during the era of Union of

South Africa, the apartheid government and homeland period; which legislation had in the past downgraded some *mahosi* while promoting others. It is the view of the current researcher that whereas such legislation victimised some individuals and their royal families, the same legislation has been allowed to determine the recognition and appointment of *mahosi*; which appointment is anti-African/ Vhavenda value systems.

Historically *vhuhosi* does not follow a process of an appointment but it has been a hereditary practice from generations to generations. The appointment of *mahosi* resides within the customary laws of succession such that it would seem that the 1994-1996 dispensations did not seem to right the wrongs that beset certain royal families and individuals. Be that as it may it became clear that the unbanning and release of the political leaders of the ANC and other liberation organisations awakened the liberation movement to the fact that regardless of the baggage that was associated with the homeland leaders it should not desist from courting *vhuhosi* and institutions during the journey to dismantle the homelands and the apartheid state. It was as a result of this that houses of traditional affairs were established at local, provincial and national levels. The following chapter examines the impact of homeland policy on Vhavenda's cultural conception of royalty and governance.

CHAPTER 6

The Impact of Homeland Policy on Vhavenda Cultural Conception of Royalty and Governance

“There is no way of stopping fools from dedicating themselves to a useless cause. How can you use the system to fight the system?” Steve Bantubonke Biko (1996: 93)

6.1 Introduction

Although *vuhosi* and institutions have been described as having been grounded on culture and tradition in the pre-colonial era, by the close of the 1970s the new apartheid city had become a reality wherein the Venda area, herein called the “RoV” among the three other sister homelands of the TBVC states, had morphed towards ‘independence’ with *mahosi* as the main role players (Heroldt and Dombo, 1992: 78-79; Madzhie, 1996: 26). As a result of what the socio-economic and political outlook of *vuhosi* and institutions had become, this exposed *mahosi* to exploitation by the apartheid system, the result of which was the gradual polarity between *mahosi* and their communities. This impacted on the nexus between royalty and governance: the subject of this chapter. At the time of the so-called ‘independence’ the only evidence of urbanisation within the ‘RoV’ was T̄hohoyandou, a small business centre, not even a town, that was nevertheless regarded as the so-called capital town. In essence T̄hohoyandou was a symbol that transcended royalty and governance as more rural Vhavenda slowly chose to settle therein. Butler, Rotberg and Adam (1977: 12) agree that the changing rural landscape affected the relationship between *mahosi* and communities as well as the historical dependency of communities on *mahosi* for the acquisition of land and the intra- as well as inter-relationship of the traditional communal *dzunde* system. Equally the massive inflow of the people dumped into the homeland caused a dramatic decline in agricultural production and grazing due to the pressure of overcrowding and the overwhelming dependency on the already reduced earnings from migrant labour (Khorommbi, 2001: 189). This was in contrast to the early years where communities used to depend solely on the mercy of *mahosi* to provide them with land for settlement, grazing and cultivation (Khorommbi, 2001: 189).

These rapidly overwhelming and ineluctable scenarios are starkly encapsulated by Oomen (2005: 3) who avers that: "If Africans have had chiefs, it was because all human societies have had them at one stage or another. But when a people have developed to a stage which discards chieftainship... then to force it on them is not liberation but enslavement." One would equally argue that being forcibly removed from the urban areas to rural homelands was also reminiscent of the ruthless uprooting of Vhavenda from the urbanised life which they had become accustomed to.

This presented communities with prodigious challenges and sowed resentment towards *vuhosi* and institutions as communalism was replaced by what the current researcher would refer to as foreign individualistic tendencies and materialism. Khorommbi (2001: 189) postulates that during the period between 1960 and 1980 the homelands had to accommodate one million Africans removed from the farms, 600, 000 (six hundred thousand) from so-called 'black spots' and three-quarters of a million removed from white cities under a policy of township relocation. One would anticipate that this resulted in overcrowding of the worst kind in Venda, which also bred an increase in the levels of poverty, especially since those who were resettled had been deemed unemployed, thus making them susceptible to psychological and social trauma. This has to be understood in the context that during the 1970s about 54, 6% (fifty-four comma six percent) of the total Vhavenda who were estimated economically active were employed outside Venda and were stationed in the manufacturing factories as well as the mines around various cities and towns of South Africa (A Framework for Development Planning in Venda, vol.1: 1979: 31). Van Rensburg (2007: 49) explains individualism as the state of being incompatible with the values that guide traditional African communities as defined by communalism such that first and foremost Africans see themselves as bound by mutual obligation to consider others and the common good. This author further avers that within this rapidly changing rural society the disruption of traditional social and family structures, of being oppressed and abused, became internalised within the African individual (Van Rensburg, 2007: 49).

Van Rensburg (2007: 30) further posits that this psychological condition is commonly known as an 'inferiority complex' because the negative portrayals by the colonial masters of African values and people in general, contributed to the perpetuation of

such a complex situation to the point that reversing this is the biggest challenge still facing Africans. In affirming this Thabiso Thakali (*Sowetan Opinion*, Friday 13 September 2019: 13) advances that the segregation that separated the South African society within itself made citizens to become aliens in their own country such that it has still not overcome the prejudicial psychology brought by colonialists. The current researcher would like to posit that the damage done ran very deep as the thrust of this chapter attempts to expose the fact that even *mahosi* had become removed from the essence of *ubuntu* and inculcated traits that were foreign to African/ Vhavenda values that they were supposed and expected to espouse, preserve, project and protect. The afore-mentioned is concretised by Mathatha Tsedu⁴¹ (*Sowetan Opinion*, Thursday 12 September 2019: 14) who postulates that “at the point of the fall of apartheid in 1994, when the physical shackles lifted the psychological and mental chains remained in place.”

Echoing these sentiments is Julian Kunnie⁴² (*City Press Voices and Careers*, Sunday 15 September 2019: 5) who asserts that the post-apartheid government mistakenly opted to repudiate Steven Biko’s Black Consciousness (BC) ideology as irrelevant in the 1990s in the interest of the so-called racial harmony because white capital was hostile to the socialistic and egalitarian principles of BC. The current researcher would agreeably posit that included in this mistake was the irreversible damage to the cultural value of *vhuhosi* and institutions. In this regard Kunnie (15 September 2019: 5) further argues that these “socialistic and egalitarian principles” are symbolic of a cultural society in which humans and the rest of the natural world, including the land, ecology, environment and all life on earth, were sacred. Flowing from the previous chapter the current researcher attempts to show that the symbolism of such a cultural society had diminished owing to the impact of the homeland system on Vhavenda cultural conception of royalty and governance.

In congruence to the above Heywood (2004: 69) accentuates these arguments by saying that the choice of government can be with it being placed in the hands of a

⁴¹ Mathata Tsedu is both a veteran political activist and journalist. He is also a former Editor-in Chief of *City Press* newspaper, former Chairman of the South African Editors Forum (Sanef) and a former member of the interim board of the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC), 2016-2018.

⁴² Julian Kunnie is professor, writer and activist working with indigenous communities.

single individual, a small group or the many, such that in each case it can be conducted either in the selfish interests of the rulers or for the benefit of the entire community. In this case the 'RoV's Patrick Mphephu obsessively believed that citizens had an obligation towards the state by imposing the so-called 'rule of law'; which was ironically iron-fisted. To Patrick Mphephu limiting the power of government was as good as risking a descent into a state of political anarchy (Heywood, 2004: 123). Flowing from this and unsurprisingly homeland 'independence' brewed a tyrannical oligarchy that depended on a rule of iron fist. In line with this Madzhie (1996: 26) exemplifies 16 June 1976 protests by students from the famous South Western Townships (Soweto) of Johannesburg, as a reaction to the imposition of this 'iron-fisted' rule of law. These protests eventually engulfed most of South Africa's black townships and included the homelands, spilled over into most of the year 1977, and coincided with the death of Biko in prison on 12 September (Biko, 1996: 242; Seekings, 2000: 30; Davenport and Saunders, 2000: 454; Musandiwa, 2014: 24). The death of Biko inflamed the political situation within the self-governing-*vhuhosi*-controlled 'RoV' which was a pronouncement of a fierce resentment for the oppressive homeland system.

In the same breadth the international community predictably refused to recognise the 'RoV' 'independence' status, during which time *mahosi* had already entrapped themselves in a political machinery which the international community regarded as a pariah. Hence the 'RoV' was shunned by the defunct Organisation of African Unity (OAU) and the United Nations Organisations/ United Nations (UNO/ UN). Ridiculously within this whole political circus the 'RoV' blamed these organisations for the retardation of its political development and international recognition. Unsurprisingly the 'RoV' was only recognised by those governments which had relations with South Africa: Taiwan, Israel, Transkei, Bophuthatswana, among others ("Venda Diary", 1988: 23; Madzhie, 1996: 26; Fokwang, 2003: 39); if the Transkei and Bophuthatswana can/ could by any chance be called 'governments' since they were mere extensions of the South African administration). To say that by allowing themselves to be swallowed into the Westminster-type of the apartheid policy, *mahosi* systematically shed the respect *vis-à-vis* the essence of African/ Vhavenda traditionalism, would be an understatement. *Mahosi* descended into the political confusion of dualism by being both traditionalists and government-employed officials; which was anti-African value systems of *vhuhosi*.

In addition to the above the current researcher views the establishment of the University of Venda (Univen) in 1982 (“Venda Diary”, 1982/83: 37; See also Benso, 1979: 93) as a turning point in the Vhavenda homeland, inasmuch as it galvanised youth and student political activism which challenged apartheid and the homeland system, the corollary being that this denuded the dictatorial tendencies of Patrick Mphephu. This gradually impacted on the cultural conception of royalty and governance within the Vhavenda homeland. During the 1980s the political landscape in South Africa was changing at an alarming rate and it could not be arrested by any means possible as a result of internal and international pressure. It was further spurred on by the formation of the UDF, by mid-1983, which became a flagship for black South Africans after the watering down of the June 16 1976 protests (Seekings, 2000: 34; Munyadziwa, 2014: 37-40). The current researcher acknowledges that while the history and impact of the formation of the UDF on South Africa’s political landscape has been documented, this has been confined to the general South African political spectrum and not the ‘RoV’ specifically. The result has been that the current researcher sourced the data on the UDF *vis-à-vis* the ‘RoV’ principally from oral evidence of local former activists, complementing it with whatever data that was available in written sources (Davenport, 2000; Seekings, 2000; Omer-Cooper, 1987), to mention a few such sources.

Equally, in the course of the discussion of this chapter the current researcher factors ritual murder, witch-hunting and witch-burning into the equation. This is because the ‘RoV’ leadership was caught in the web of political intrigue of unimaginable proportions, which predictably premised their downfall. Ritual murder, witch-hunting and witch-burning became prevalent in the Venda homeland, with the youth and student activists summarily executing those accused of either witchcraft or ritual murder, at the back of which they called for the demise of the homeland government (Khangala, 1990; Mathagu, 1990; Khorommbi, 2001; Munthali, 2005; Tshamano, 2005). This study discusses all of the above in tandem with the impact of the homeland system on Vhavenda’s cultural conception of *vuhosi*/ royalty and governance. Due to the Constitutional and political imperatives that arose immediately after the dawn of democracy in South Africa’s post-1994 legislative processes, the current researcher could not help but take a glimpse beyond this historic year. Therefore without indulging much into the post-1994 period, the current researcher was tempted into making a

treacherous journey that did not necessarily go beyond the legislative formative period of the year 1997. The discussion below starts with a focus on royalty, governance and absenteeism.

6.2 Royalty, Governance and Absenteeism: Patrick Mphedu's Yoke of Dualism and Favouritism

According to Van Rensburg (2007: 31) a core characteristic of leadership is the willingness and transparency to be accountable to the followers. The said characteristic indicates the leader's full acceptance of responsibilities that are related to the legitimate concerns of his/ her followers. The current researcher posits that this characteristic of leadership exists only if it is accompanied by legitimate authority rather than absolute power; which absolute power is reminiscent of the 'RoV' where legitimate authority had been replaced by oligarchic power. Similarly, Biko (1996: 44) awakens the reader to the reality that due to the apartheid system it had become difficult to talk with authority on anything to do with African culture; as espoused by African value systems, culture and traditional practices *vis-à-vis* the relationship with the subjects. In this regard Kunnie (15 September 2019: 5) makes reference to the fact that Biko was critical of the way the apartheid capitalist system viewed and treated Black workers as cogs in the machine, devoid of human needs and feelings. This statement rings true if one were to make a reflection of *mahosi* who had become salaried workers of the homeland system to be used in the quest for the achievement of the segregation policy. Relatedly, the goals of the segregation policy in turn impacted the image of royalty and what it represented for social and administrative justice in the eyes of their subjects. To cement this, Lonsdale (1998: 11) accentuates the preceding statement thus: "...Africans have had the misfortune, throughout history, to be objects of the generally ignorant or arrogant actions of others, and mimic-men themselves, not actors on their own account."

Amidst these misgivings the unfortunate part is that *mahosi* became transformed into servants who were absent and dislodged from their subjects by those (whites) who imposed their paternalistic views and policies on them. The result was that *mahosi* spent most of their lives in homeland cocoons called governments as they had

divorced themselves from their vaunted pillars of African/ Vhavenda value laden culture and traditionalism. Therefore, much as the legitimate authority of *mahosi* had been replaced by illegitimate acquiescence soon after subjugation, equally the traditional bond between them and their subjects became weakened by modernisation and the 'detrribalisation' of urban Vhavenda (SA K20 E5/38[22], Socio-economic development of Native Areas Commission [Tomlinson Report]: Record of Evidence, 1952.06.19 at Pietersburg, 19.06.1952: 1101-1111; SA K20 3(18), (Report): Record of Evidence, Sibasa Rehabilitation Committee, Pietersburg, 17.06.1952: 868-904; TA GOV 1152 PS 50/37/08. Telegram to Governor of the Transvaal to Secretary of State. Powers of paramount chiefs, 19.09.1908: 5).

Biko (1996: 95) further posits that 'tribal' cocoons called 'homelands' were nothing else but sophisticated concentration camps where black South Africans were allowed to suffer 'peacefully'. In describing the placement of *mahosi/vhuhosi* within the homeland political circus the current researcher borrows from Maphalala (1998: 7 and 9) who argues that the "ideas that were dreamed and created by... Europeans were created to maintain power and domination"; which ideas make Africans copycats of Europeans. The foregoing analysis should be understood within the context that according to African values *mahosi* were there through the mandate of the people. Maphalala (1998: 10) further singles out 'leadership' as one of the pillars of *vhuhosi*, which became eroded due to materialism and the focus of *mahosi* on apartheid while they gallivanted as tailcoat protégés of the 'celebrated' separate development of Verwoerd. One of the most damning dent on *vhuhosi* within the homeland system is that much as it encouraged the 'flowering' of the institution *vis-à-vis* 'ethnic nations' it strictly constructed differences among Africans while it promoted unity among white people, who equally differed as 'tribes' in histories and origins (Maphalala, 1998: 17). Biko (1996: 95) cements this by averring that black South Africans must have learned to refuse being pawns in a white man's game because no Bantustan leader could claim to be acting on his own initiative when entering the realms of Bantustan politics.

As a result of the above polarity between *vhuhosi* and institutions crept in among Vhavenda due to Patrick Mphahlele's homeland leadership style since he realised that his survival in the highest seat of homeland politics depended upon the support of a few chosen *mahosi*, especially those with his agnatic links. These *mahosi* were

generally regents who supported him during his struggle against the opposition VIPP, such that he was not prepared to lose their support for whatever reason (Musifha, interviewed 1 July 2019). As such when the rightful heirs to *vuhosi* came of age Patrick Mphephu side-lined them, replacing them by pliable paternal uncles and/ or half-brothers who would in addition be awarded with ministerial positions in the homeland government. For example, during the Venda homeland era one *Gota* Tshikalange of a village called Tshififi under Mphaphuli Traditional Authority, and a staunch opponent of Patrick Mphephu and the apartheid government, was banished to the town of Kuruman in the present Northern Cape Province, for his political beliefs and for being an avid critic of the so-called 'life president'. This further made Patrick Mphephu unpopular among Tshikalange's supporters as well as other affected communities supportive of various potential successors; and thus inflamed tensions within the homeland (VG, Cases of Chieftainship Disputes: Case Numbers, Tshivhase 154/86, Sinthumule 193/91, Kutama 56/90, 1982: n.p.; VG: Commission of Inquiry into Venda Vuhosi Affairs, 2(2), 1990/1: 725-726). Most of these victims and potential successor only realised their dreams of ascending to their royal inheritance after the death of Patrick Mphephu in 1988.

Cases of maladministration were widespread during Patrick Mphephu's rule. For example, Aǀidzulwi Alfred, mentioned earlier in the previous chapter, was a very unpopular figure within a large section of Vhavenda people under his influence, remained very close to Patrick Mphephu. Fokwang (2003: 40-41) advances that it was probable that the main obstacle to Patrick Mphephu's dream of extending his hegemony beyond his traditional domain of Ramabulana over Tshivhase domain was the military reputation and the power of the *mahosi* of Tshivhase. As a result in order to apparently buy favours Patrick Mphephu appointed Aǀidzulwi Alfred to four ministerial portfolios in government simultaneously, making him the most senior cabinet minister, which situation was not opposed by other senior ministers, including the older ones like Ravele, for fear of losing their own positions (VG, Le Roux: Report of the Commission of Inquiry into the Causes of Unrest and Ritual Murders in Venda during 1988: 180-184).

As if that was not enough Patrick Mphephu attempted to perform the dual responsibility of a modern 'head of state' while during the weekends he returned to his *vuhosi*

position in his home village of Dzanani. Usually Patrick Mphhephu would be way absent and be derelict of royal responsibilities, as he spent most of his time travelling abroad or in the capital centre of T̄hohoyand̄ou (Khangala, 1999: 90). To corroborate this assertion Tshivhangwaho Solomon Ntsandeni⁴³ (Interviewed on 22 July 2019) says that most *mahosi* who were co-opted into the homeland government left their royal kraals and settled in the newly created capital since they had become employees of the apartheid government. Predictably this absenteeism affected *mahosi*'s closeness to their subjects. To make matters worse some of the ministers appointed were not even *mahosi* but *magota* such that there were instances where *mahosi* would be employed as chauffeurs of *magota*-ministers and even took orders from them as they drove them around in official cars. During such circumstances the essence of traditional hierarchy had been flouted as a result of co-option of culture and traditionalism into the homeland system (Pastor Dr. Aluoneswi Enos Randitsheni⁴⁴, interviewed on 11 September 2019). Randitsheni (interviewed on 11 September 2019) further avers that *mahosi* had shunned their cultural and traditional responsibilities as well as obligations to their subjects and that they were being used as the crafters of the system by those who, in all practical terms, should have been their subjects as well. However, because of the colour of their skin as well as the hegemonic and paternalistic advantage they enjoyed over *mahosi* they had employed them to denigrate their African values. Musiṯha (2012: 35) accentuates this assertion by mentioning that *mahosi* had become unaccountable to their communities and occupied positions similar to those of governors (cited from Ntsebenza, 1999: 2-3).

During his reign in the 'RoV' Patrick Mphhephu was always surrounded by people who had come to ask for favours in government in the form of work promotion and/ or parents who were pleading for job placement for their children, from which he in return

⁴³ The late Tshivhangwaho Solomon Ntsandeni was a retired Chief Education Specialist (CES) in the former 'Republic of Venda'. He held a Master's Degree in History, specialising in the history of the Mphaphuli dynasty.

⁴⁴ Dr. Alunamutwe Enos Randitsheni is an ordained Pastor of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Southern Africa (ELCSA). He is currently the Dean in the Devhula-Lebowa Circuit, ELCSA-Northern Diocese. In 2015 he graduated for a Doctor of Philosophy Degree in African Studies (DAS) from Univen wherein he investigated ritual murders in the Vhembe District of Limpopo in South Africa.

generally accrued benefits reminiscent of corruption and not tributes within the realm of African/ Vhavenda values and the tenets of traditionalism. In any case Section 13 of the Venda Constitution empowered Patrick Mphephu to hire and discharge anyone at his whim without advancing any reason (VG, Le Roux: Report of the Commission of Inquiry into the Causes of Unrest and Ritual Murders in Venda during 1989/90: 3-8; Musitha, interviewed 1 July 2019). Such instances caused division within the homeland administrative machinery as some devout civil servants had hoped for promotion on merit while ironically others were promoted based on their loyalty to the powers that be meeting the stipulated requirements. In describing this kind of a group, Maloka (1995: 39) says that through salaries, accumulation, “pensions”, loans, contracts and corruption, this class together with some *mahosi*, carved a place for itself in the apartheid establishment, opening businesses, buying farms, creeping into the stock market and so forth. This is the extent to which communalism had been replaced by material and individualistic tendencies that had infected the custodianship of African/ Vhavenda values and traditionalism. What has been captured in this paragraph by Maloka also negates the so-called motto that was espoused by the *mahosi*-led government as it appears in the official coat of arms: “Shumela Venda” literally meaning “Work for Venda” (Republic of Venda Constitution Act (Act no. 9 of 1979): 35).

This means that the *mahosi*-led government was in violation of its own oath of office of “Shumela Venda” by acting parallel to and in contrast to the motto that they crafted and adopted on the day of their so-called independence. This is because *mahosi* were no longer accountable to Vhavenda; they continued to line their pockets and accumulating property with impunity. According to Ntsandeni (Interviewed on 22 July 2019) these developments affected other communal practices such as *dzunde*. This was particularly the case because various Vhavenda communities were no longer interested in working in *madzunde* (plural) as they had also slid into the individualistic mode of doing things and were no longer depended on the help from their fellow community members and *mahosi*. The discussion below looks at the position of the youth *vis-à-vis* the impact of the homeland system on Vhavenda’s cultural conception of royalty and governance.

6.3 Traditionalism, the Youth and Students within the Venda Homeland

Grobler (2005: 31, quoting from Cassel, 1997) reminds the reader that tradition is defined as the handing down of opinions, practices and customs from ancestors for posterity, most importantly by oral communication. Equally the author posits that alongside tradition is culture as a multi-dimensional phenomenon that is difficult to define, safe to arrive at the conclusion that it is a result of human adaptation within ethnos to the various environments, be it a natural, social or supernatural environment, in accordance with man's unique nature and characteristics (Grobler, 2005: 31). While cultural aspects such as clothing, language, behaviour and settlement patterns are in constant flux due to socio-economic changes, they also possess certain traditions that remain moderately unchanged despite these changes, which are traditional dances and clothing, among others (Grobler, 2005: 31). Munthali (2005: 34) asserts that culture plays a very important role in society, as practices, beliefs and customs are kept by culture, while still admitting that culture is not static but dynamic.

It is essential to note how Grobler juxtapositions the two concepts, culture and tradition, which are factored in this discussion. Although grounded on, orientated and perceived from these two concepts, Vhavenda cultural conception of *vuhosi* suffered from adoption, adaptation and being subsumed into a foreign politico-administrative system. This usually and generally happened during 'national' shows, 'independence' celebrations or whatever official gathering that could be occasioned by the 'independent' homeland government, *alas* in the name of 'Vendahood'. Previously and traditionally, equivalents to such occasions were the burial of a *khosi*; the inauguration of a successor to the throne; wedding celebrations; seed planting events; celebrating abundant rainfall; thanksgiving for abundant reaping ceremonies as well as other cultural village competitions or royal visitations when *tshikona* and *domba* (python) dances were performed by women, men, young men and young girls, respectively, where music, song and dance form(ed) part of Vhavenda lifestyle ("Venda Travelogue, n.d.: 3; Benso, 1979: 25-28; Musiṭha, interviewed on 1 July 2019).

This is corroborated by Mahosi and Tshamano (2012: 1) who aver that among Vhavenda, as it is general among Africans, 'orality' embraces a number of aspects:

praise, celebration, culture and tradition, history and origin, all of which relate to self-identity in their own way, and are expressed through song, poems, music, dance, art and folklore. Therefore, this exposes *tshikona* and the *domba* dance as symbols of significance during important occasions that are communal in nature, be they during sadness, happiness as well as worship, thereby attaching to them a role of social cohesion inasmuch as individuals gather for a common purpose, depending on the occasion at whatever point in time (Mahosi and Tshamano, 2012: 4). However, under the conditions of a homeland and the 'RoV', ethnic homeland loyalty replaced the general South Africa's national political aspirations in a move which the white leadership had hoped would diffuse calls for the politico-moral necessity of African liberation (Worden, 1994: 111). Mahosi and Tshamano (2012: 1) further opine that during the period of socio-political development within colonisation and apartheid, which included the homeland system, all these traditional and cultural elements were abused, misused and even misrepresented to achieve minority political objectives, with the result that this eroded the credible self-identity and *ethnic* prejudice due to their politicisation.

The historical association of the youth and adults with these cultural activities served as a boon to the Vhavenda homeland government. This is because of the general belief that obedience, acquiescence and patriotism were better nurtured at a tender age. As such the homeland government used the youth to inculcate 'ethnic nationalism' and 'ethnic patriotism'. Therefore the youth, especially at primary and secondary school level were obligated to present themselves and participate at quarterly and annual events such as school choir competitions, various cultural events and, of course, the much loathed 'independence' celebrations ("Venda Travelogue", n.d.: 9-10; Benso, 1979: 36-39; Musiṭha, interviewed on 1 July 2019). Furthermore, by invoking the so-called Child Welfare (Act No. 33 of 1960) and the Republic of Venda Constitution Act of (1979: 38) Patrick Mphephu and the homeland government were able to monitor the development of the youth based on its mandate of keeping them on the straight and narrow by holding quarterly camps to brainwash these students and the youth in the name of life education and respect for the 'state' and its leadership.

During these camps the students and the youth would also be involved in various sporting codes and even travelled to the sister 'republics' of the TBVC to interact with their counterparts (Telephonic interview with Athur Mahuluhulu⁴⁵, 6 August 2019). In line with this the 'RoV' had budgets for equipment, provisions, clothing, medical expenses and financial assistance that were meant for youth camps, where the youth were 're-educated' and/ or 'redeveloped' in the love for their 'country', the RoV', to respect and be obedient to the homeland government leadership: *mahosi* (Estimates of the expenditure, ending 31st March 1972: 10). Equally, every Muvenda person of the age of eighteen and above was expected, rather than be at liberty, to cast a vote during the homeland elections while in the same vein freedom of speech was extant only on paper (Republic of Venda Constitution Act (Act no. 9 of 1979): 11). It suffices to say that parenting and nurturing in this regard was not necessarily in line with the ethics of traditional values and such institutions like initiation schools. The youth were groomed to help prop up the abhorred system instead of upholding the culture and traditional practices as defined by African/ Vhavenda values. Be that as it may this process ironically helped to prepare the youth for future activism within South Africa's changing socio-political environment, especially during the years following the aftermath of the June 16 1976 uprisings.

6.3.1 The road to the watershed 16 June 1976 Protests: Its bearing on Vhavenda youth and student politics

According to Khangala (1999: 82) Vhavenda youth were first drawn into politics during the opposition days of the VIPP which exposed Patrick Mphephu's shortcomings during various canvassing platforms for elections. Although not fully understanding homeland politics the youth exuded an affinity to the VIPP and a degree of 'enlightenment' unlike the traditionalists who were viewed at as representing backwardness and rigidity. In contrast, the VIPP depicted itself as an elite political grouping of the 'enlightened' although ironically they also propagated for Patrick Mphephu to assume the apex position of a 'paramount chief' and stay out of homeland politics, and thus assume an apolitical stance (Heroldt and Dombo, 1992: 73).

⁴⁵ Arthur Mahuluhulu is Senior Subject Advisor (SSA) in the Department of Education stationed in the Giyani area in Mopani District Municipality (MDM) of the Limpopo Province of South Africa.

Importantly, the influence by the VIPP changed the youth and students' outlook of the 'RoV' government, and *mahosi* in particular, which was a break from unquestioningly looking at them as heroes and the wherewithal in their traditional socio-political and economic life or space. However, the current researcher cannot be faulted to regard the VIPP as having been hypocritical because save to say that the party was generally composed of non-royalty, they were also party to the homeland policy, *alas* from a contrasting vantage point. However, it was also a case of 'if you are living in glass houses do not throw stones' by the VIPP. This is because the party was equally complicit by operating within the homeland system if the quotation from Biko above at the beginning of the chapter is anything to go by.

Flowing from the above the eruption of the Soweto uprising in June of 1976 found Vhavenda youth in a 'post-incubation' stage of political consciousness that had been nurtured by the VIPP's opposition politics. In the same vein the build up to the Soweto students uprising in 1976 was nurtured by the BC teachings of the late Biko who encouraged black South African students to imbue its philosophy which emphasised that black South Africans needed to take pride in their blackness regardless of their cultural affiliation (Giliomee and Mbenga, 2007: 354): thus a clarion call to unity and solidarity. Biko's BC encouraged black South Africans, as well as the youth and students in particular, to be proud of and accept the colour of one's skin, take cognisance of and believe in their potential in all sectors of the society, be it as students, workers and the youth, to radically fight against discrimination in all its forms through the slogan "Black is beautiful" (Ellis and Sechaba, 1992: 70-71). In the words of Lebelo (*Sowetan*, Monday October 21 2019: 11) "Black society was thus constituted and organizationally mobilized when unrest erupted in Soweto in June 1976. These words cement the readiness that the youth and the entire black South African society, had been 'BC-converted' to regardless of efforts by the white oligarchy to stunt this milestone. Therefore, in this regard the seed of determination for the pride of self-identity had been planted.

Along with this Biko (1996: 95) stressed the essence of cultural affiliation *vis-à-vis* Blackness. Resultantly, at the encouragement of Biko and other such BC luminaries like Onkgopotse Abram Tiro, in 1969 black South African students broke away from the white dominated and apartheid government recognised National Union of South

African Students (NUSAS) to form an all-black university organization in the South African Students Organisation (SASO) (Lemon, 1987: 336; Khorommbi, 2001: 195; Giliomee and Mbenga, 2007: 353). One cannot be faulted to understand the stance adopted by the majority of black South African students as they practically realised that being in bed with their white students counterparts could prove counter-productive, given the latter's liberal stance on black issues and lack of radicalism. Black South African student believed that their white counterparts could not represent their interests from a socio-political victim's point of view. In this regard Lebelo (2019: 11) posits that between the formation of SASO in 1969 and the BPC in 1972, the core of NUSAS leadership peeled away to constitute themselves into new radicals.

This served as a turning point because the affiliation of black South African students in NUSAS had placed them in a compromising position because they were in bed with the privileged group who were "born with a silver spoon in their mouths", had the law of the land on their side. They therefore could not be trusted to honestly champion the radical aspirations of their black South African counterparts, who were feeling the impact of oppression, suppression and discrimination on a daily basis. In surmise of this Tsedu (12 September 2019: 14) bravely says that the "most potent weapon in the hands of the oppressor is the mind of the oppressed." This means that with everything at their disposal the powers that be professed to know black South Africans, and *mahosi* of Vhavenda and their people in particular, since they had the authority to determine their political destiny. Khorommbi (2001: 195) accentuates the significance of SASO by stressing that the organisation rejected the Bantustan system with its aim of dividing black South Africans, an issue which was critical for Bantustan leaders. This means that right from its birth even Bantustan leaders were not comfortable with SASO's appearance and presence in the political scene.

Similarly, the fact that during that time schools around Venda, especially secondary schools, accommodated learners in hostels the majority of whom hailed from the urban areas, especially the surrounding townships of Johannesburg and Pretoria, represented the melting pot of socio-political and student dissemination of information, which stood Vhavenda students' political activism and resistance in good stead for years to come (Khangala, 1999: 82; see also Seekings, 2000: 11-12). According to Marx (1992: 61) the Soweto uprising of 1976, during which black South African

students protested against the use of Afrikaans as a medium of instruction in black South African schools, represented the break from “the days of bowing to white domination and scraping for remnants”: hence the description of the event as a watershed or defining moment. Marx (1992: 70) further avers that the 1976 uprising undoubtedly indicated the spread and influence throughout the urban areas of the ideas and sentiments associated with BC, even if the event was not formally organised by the BC.

Meanwhile Biko’s (1996: 95) BC teachings found resonance even in the Bantustans where the activist declared that black people must constantly pressurise the Bantustan leaders to pull out of the political cul-de-sac that had been created by the system. In this regard Lebelo (2019: 11) succinctly argues that if BC was about ripping the Bantu out of the African and moulding him/ her into a black South African subject, the imposition of Afrikaans was a white man’s supremacy’s desperate attempt to thrust the constituted black South African subject back into the Bantustan. In agreement Musiṭha (interviewed 1 July 2019) mentions that *vuhosi* was influenced by the ideology of apartheid because new their roles were supposed to be endorsed by white institutions and became compromised by the influence of white objectives. Biko (1996: 46) further impresses on the disciples of his teachings that what the Nationalists did under the ‘able’ guidance of their theoretician Verwoerd, was to convert the naked policy of wanton discrimination: this was evident for the poorest of the poor to see after they were carted to the homelands *en masse*. The discussion below traverses from the June 16 uprising to how the event filtered through to the youth in the ‘RoV’.

6.3.2 The 1977 Youth and Student March within the ‘RoV’

Davenport and Saunders (2000: 452) assert that from the very early stages there were signs of keen student support for the Sowetans in other centres around South Africa. In this regard these authors further make reference to the report of the Cillie Commission which covers the violence of June 16 to February 1977 in the various places around South Africa; including the homelands with Venda completing the jigsaw. During 1976 and 1977, the ‘pre-independence’ period, schooling experienced massive disruptions (2000: 452). The current researcher’s personal experience at the

time was when at the beginning of the November examinations of 1977⁴⁶, secondary school students disrupted schooling around the Venda homeland and destroyed exam papers, in solidarity with the Soweto students, and in defiance of the political system in general (See also Davenport and Saunders, 2000: 452). Students in Venda gathered at the Makwarela Stadium in Sibasa in preparation to march to the nearby homeland government offices to demand for the scrapping of Bantu Education and the revocation of the apartheid policy and the homeland system.

According to Randitsheni (interviewed on 11 September 2019) the government had captured black education and in Venda the students were not ready to tolerate the status quo of oppression, especially as it was being espoused by their own *mahosi*. In support of this Biko (1996: 94) posits that Bantustan leaders subconsciously sided and abetted in the total subjugation of the black South Africans. The two assertions by Randitsheni and Biko go a long way to show that by this time the students' eyes were open to the political situation around them such that they were not ready to roll over but stand up for what they thought was their social and political right by opposing the imposition of homeland rule through *mahosi*. In support of this Kunnie (15 September 2019: 5) accentuates this by averring that violence by the oppressed is a response to the violence of the ruling, privileged classes of society and that it stems from the depths of powerlessness and frustration. In response to and in order to further consolidate this powerlessness and frustration the regime used the police and the army to employ hard-handed tactics to deal with activism: the general modus operandi throughout South Africa during that era. However, this did not succeed in diluting the resolve of the black South African students and the youth. Lebelo (2019: 11) supports this through the assertion that the radicalism of BC continued to inspire a mass mobilization when, for example, the Soweto Students Representative Council (SSRC) organized two campaigns of student marches to John Vorster Square, then South Africa's hub of detention and torture for black South African activists, to demand the release of political detainees.

⁴⁶ During the November 1977 exam disruptions in Venda the current researcher was a final year matric learner at Khwevha High School, near Tshilidzini Hospital, which also accommodated students in hostels. The hostels of this high school were later converted into Dimani Agricultural High School while the classes section were renamed Khwevha Commercial High School.

In other words, the counter-response was that the 'oppressed' students were equally reactionary by disrupting learning throughout the Venda homeland, especially in renowned senior secondary schools of Tshivhase, Mphaphuli, Mphephu, Khwevha, among others. In retaliation the Venda self-governing leadership of *mahosi* permanently closed hostels in order to dissuade those students from the Witwatersrand areas from attending schooling in Venda, thereby thwarting any efforts for the youth and students to organise in hostels, as it was called. The move by Patrick Mphephu's government further muddied the waters because the youth and students blamed *mahosi* for getting in bed with the oppressor (Randitsheni, interviewed 11 September 2019). According to Khorommbi (2001: 202) Patrick Mphephu's government was being tested regardless of him ruling with an iron fist because Vhavenda seemed determined to take their destiny into their own hands and reform the schooling system; with the assistance of even those who previously showed little interest in politics. This was an indication of the depth of politicisation that had taken root in the Venda homeland, where the majority of the youth were beneficiaries of the rapid expansion of senior schools in the Venda area (Khorommbi, 2001: 203).

Among the student activists in Venda schools were individuals like Sydney Mufamadi,⁴⁷ who at the time was a member of the South African Students' Movement (SASM)⁴⁸, then a matriculant at Khwevha High School (Nyambeni Victor Mulaudzi, interviewed 15 January 2014; Davies and O'Meara, 1984: 35). The SASM was established to politically mobilise high school students who would become the driving force of the mass youth movement of the 1970s (Lebelo, 2019: 110). Other leaders who were active in Venda to help coordinate the formation of and consolidate the

⁴⁷ Dr. Sidney Fholisani Mufamadi is a former Secretary-General of the Congress of South Africa's Trade Union (COSATU) and a former student activist during the late 1970s and 1980s. He served as South Africa's first Minister of Safety and Security, 1994-1999, and Provincial and Local Government, 1999-2008. At the time of this study, he is/ was Director of the Faculty of Management, School of Leadership, University of Johannesburg (UJ), Gauteng Province of South Africa.

⁴⁸ SASM was a secondary school subsidiary or affiliate of the South African Students' Organisation (SASO), a university student body which had broken away from the white dominated National Union of South Africa Students (NUSAS).

presence of SASM were Dr. Rev. Simon Tshenuwani Farisani⁴⁹, a Lutheran clergy based in Beuster Mission, Maungani, west of Thohoyandou, was a member of the BCM. He played a prominent role in conscientising the youth and students in Venda to fight for the liberation from apartheid South Africa and the reincorporation of Venda into the broad future national political development of South Africa (Magwedzha Mphaphuli⁵⁰, interviewed on 17 January 2015; Gabriel Malaka⁵¹, interviewed telephonically on 4 September 2019). In response Patrick Mphhephu's government passed Proclamation R276 which allowed for detention without trial, reminiscent of acute repression in all TBVC 'states' like Bophuthatswana and Ciskei, and helped the homeland government to deal effectively with youth and students' opposition and activism (Khangala, 1999: 82). Ntsebenza (1999: 85) accentuates this by averring that during this period, most *vuhosi* and institutions derived their power from their viciousness, protected by an equally vicious apartheid system while they left the rural people with a few options but to comply.

Regardless of these developments many Vhavenḁa youth from the urban areas fled from the wrath of security police in the Witwatersrand to Venda where incidentally the spirit of resistance was already sparking into a flame to challenge the legitimacy of the homeland authority. What followed was further disruption of school attendance during which time government property was damaged by students during running battles with the police. As Patrick Mphhephu did not oppose Afrikaans, the youth and students automatically categorised him as a supporter of a system which they detested. As a result students around South Africa, including Venda, who were suspected of being

⁴⁹ Dr. Tshenuwani Simon Farisani is former Member of the Executive Council (MEC) for transport in the Limpopo Provincial government of South Africa. He too suffered numerous detentions and torture from Patrick Mphhephu's government.

⁵⁰ The late Magwedzha Mphaphuli is a former activist and exile as well as the former Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Tshilidzini Hospital, in the Thulamela Local Municipality (TLM) of the Vhembe District Municipality (VDM), Limpopo Province of South Africa. He was a member of the Mphaphuli Royal family, an indication that opposition to the system knew no boundaries and tradition.

⁵¹ Gabriel Mutimedi Malaka is a councillor in the Thulamela Municipality and a former Director in the Limpopo Provincial Government. He is a former student activist of the University of the North, now Limpopo. He became a member of the Northern Transvaal Action Committee (NOTRACO), an affiliate of the UDF, which he, together with the individuals mentioned above, helped popularise in the former Venda homeland around 1984/85.

affiliates of the ANC fled into exile to join the liberation movement *en masse* (Khangala, 1999: 83). Patrick Mphethu went further by increasing police and military presence, this which reaped wide-ranging arrests and detentions, and closed more schools in their numbers, with student hostels shut permanently. The process appeared to be targeting learners from the urban areas who were massively affected as it was around exam period (Randitsheni, Interviewed on 11 September 2019; Musandiwa, 2014: 45). Therefore for the students from the urban areas it was a frustrating period as they could not return home for fear of arrest by security police while in Venda they had been equally rendered vulnerable as they were regarded as *persona non grata*. Regardless of this the years that followed saw Beuster/ Maungani Mission Centre becoming the meca of political meetings and refuge for the youth, students and other political activists, to which the homeland leaders viewed the Lutheran Church as a threat to political stability in the homeland (Malaka, interviewed on 4 September 2019; Mphaphuli, interviewed on 17 January 2015).

Fuelling the resilience of activism in Venda was the presence of SASM and the death of Biko in detention on 12 September 1977, after being brutally tortured by apartheid security police (Biko, 1996: 242; Seekings, 2000: 30; Davenport and Saunders, 2000: 454; Musandiwa, 2014: 24). Biko's death created a significant political vacuum within the black South Africa political space, especially with the absence of the outlawed liberation movement in the country and radical activism, the banning of organisations (including the BCM) and many student leaders having fled into exile. However, this equally further inflamed youth and students' resistance, which students had been influenced by Biko's 'black man you are on your own' maxim (Biko, 1996: 46). These developments did not deter the determination of students, the youth and communities, because a number of organisations sprung up throughout the country, especially at the beginning of the 1980s (Davenport and Saunders, 2000: 311; Giliomee and Mbenga, 2007: 365; Lonsdale; 1988: 205). The Azanian People's Organisation (AZAPO) was formed on the blueprint of BC teachings, as a flagship to 'ideologise' the students to carry the struggle forward, under the leadership of such people as Curtis Nkondo, Saths Cooper and others, to promote Biko's teachings, especially at black South African universities (Lemon, 1987: 336; Venter, 1989: 159). From here student organisations like the Azanian Students Congress (AZASCO), a subsidiary of AZAPO, Christian movements, youth, worker, civic and church organisations followed and

spread throughout Venda (Ntando Emmanuel Mukwevho⁵², interviewed 6 September 2019; Lodge and Nasson, 1991: 36; Seekings, 2000: 23).

6.3.3 Vhavenḁa clergy and their call to action to oppose apartheid and Venḁa's road to 'independence'

Although religious leaders had been mentioned above as some of the defiant people against the homeland system and for political activism, the current researcher felt that it would be a travesty of justice if their role did not receive some attention, even if it is brief. Khorombi (2001: 196) and Randitsheni (Interviewed on 11 September 2019) are in concert that the majority of the clergy in Venda were opposed to the homeland system and as a result of their criticism they suffered oftentimes from detention. This should be understood within the context that during that time repression was used to defend and enforce the system. Randitsheni (interviewed on 11 September 2019) further mentioned that among the clergy were divisions. This is because there were a few among the clergy who supported the homeland system as they benefited from it materially, especially those from the Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk and/ or Dutch Reformed Church (NGK/DRC), by being close to *mahosi* and Patrick Mphephu, in particular, as well as the apartheid government in general.

According to Khorombi (2001: 196) and Randitsheni (interviewed on 11 September 2019) one of the most important religious groups to emerge during that time was the Bold Evangelical Christian Organisation (BECO, a UDF affiliate) which was formed in 1972 by students at Mphaphuli High School under the leadership of Cyril Ramaphosa⁵³. The two sources further aver that although it was not a political organisation, BECO preached a contextualised gospel that left the state challenged by its message. The organisation later changed its name to Evangelical Christian Organisation (ECO) and disguised as a musical group but still did not escape the

⁵² Ntando Emmanuel Mukwevho was a learner at ṰhohoyanṰou Secondary School around 1988.

During this period and together with one Boiki Tsedu they were members of the AZAPO youth and student movement, the Azanian Youth Organization (AZAYO) and Azaniana Students Congress (AZASCO). He also served a short term in jail in Venda for his activism.

⁵³ During the heydays of the UDF Cyril Ramaphosa was the Secretary-General of the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) and a prominent political activist who was also regarded as an enemy of the 'RoV' and white South Africa. He is presently the President of the Republic of South Africa (2018-).

attention of Patrick Mphahlele's government. In support of Khorommbi and Randitsheni, Khangala (1999: 81) posits that religious ministers like Farisani, Lutheran priest Zwoitwa Nevhuṭalu, the late lay preacher Tshifhiwa Muofhe (a Lutheran lay preacher who died in detention in Venda 1982), to mention a few, were not afraid to condemn the policy of the South African government of separate development by preaching the gospel of liberation which undermined Patrick Mphahlele's rule. This made them the target of the security apparatus of the Venda homeland, because their gospel thrived in situations of political oppression, hunger and suffering: hence the imposition of the system triggered resistance among the youth and the churches, leading to detention wherein many were tortured and some even perished in jail (Kgatla, 2016: n.p).

Kgatla (2016: n.p.) further accentuates the situation in Venda by saying that political activism was influenced by the teachings of Biko's BCM and the Black Peoples Convention (BPC) such that Farisani believes that the students' uprising in Venda was second in magnitude only to that in Soweto and thus gave impetus to Vhavenda's struggle to break from the shackles of homeland oppression. Therefore besides the role played by the UDF (to be discussed in the next section) in the politicisation of Vhavenda, many Christian leaders opposed the government of the Venda homeland system and paid the price of enduring torture in detention (Randitsheni, interviewed on 11 September 2019).

Another UDF-affiliated organisation formed in Venda was the Confession Fellowship, a religious structure formed at Maungani in 1986 consisting of religious leaders from the Lutheran Church, Presbyterian Church, the Dutch Reformed (which was late to show its true intentions in the struggle), the Roman Catholic Church (RCC), Church of Christ denominations, and included doctors, students and the youth, while it was also linked to the South African Council of Churches (SACC) (Randitsheni, interviewed on 11 September 2019). According to Mphahleli (interviewed on 17 January 2015) the Fellowship gathered on numerous occasions at Maungani for political meetings in the guise of prayer meetings, which meetings were mainly meant for the collapse of Patrick Mphahlele's government and the incorporation of Venda into the broader South Africa; thereby making churches vehicles for political mobilisation in the homeland.

Mulweli, literally meaning “the one who fights for the rights of others”, was another important milestone of the UDF’s campaign for the release of political detainees throughout the Venda homeland, who had been detained for their political convictions and their defiance against the oppressive, repressive and brutal regime (Malaka, interviewed on 4 September 2019). All in all Mulweli’s focus was to help political prisoners with legal representation and provide financial support and food for the families of detainees in the absence of their loved ones. As a way of trying to derail the objectives of political activists late in 1989 Ravele established a section of Religious Affairs within the Department of Education with the claim that its main objective was to enable pastors to guide the students and youth properly (Khorommbi, 2001: 205).

The current researcher is of the view that Religious Affairs section was aimed at neutralising and weaken the sting that the broad-based UDF-alliance was inflicting on the ‘illegitimate’ regime in Venda, by attempting to ‘re-educate’, brainwash and depoliticise the youth and students, who by this time had reached unprecedented levels of activism for the Venda police. From their part the UDF-affiliated pastors responded with a letter to Ravele questioning the reasons behind the proposed Religious Affairs section, and impressed on the ‘president’ that the problem was the violent response of the security officers in dealing with grievances, and called for the reincorporation of Venda into the future and new South Africa (Mphaphuli, interviewed on 17 January 2015; Malaka, interviewed on 4 September 2019). Regardless of this these developments did not stop the activities of activists as they were determined to see to the finality of the reincorporation of Venda and its people; what with the wheel of political change grinding at a faster pace in the early 1990s after the release of Mandela and other political prisoners. The discussion below looks at the political journey travelled by the UDF in Venda.

6.3.4 The United Democratic Front (UDF) and the changing political landscape in Venda: The ‘RoV’s gradual demise, 1983-1991

Alan Paton once said that South Africa was a country where one hopes on Mondays and equally despairs on Fridays (Lemon, 1987: cover page). These words ring true if one were to take a look at the events that followed the 1976-1977 years as this period unexpectedly shook the white government of South Africa to reality while it also

emboldened the black South African masses that militant opposition was possible against the tide of repressive laws: which laws had been accompanied by the envisaged establishment of oppressive political extensions in the form of homeland homelands. It also rings true if one were to consider that the death of Biko could have hopelessly dashed the resolve of black South Africa's opposition to the oppressive system, and the homeland system in particular, in the midst of arrests, death-in-detention and students fleeing into exile. Be that as it may, according to Malaka (Interviewed on 4 September 2019) steps towards the formation of the UDF began late in the 1970s and proceeded well into the early years of the 1980s at the instigation of Allan Boesak. The theologian had called for a united front of churches, civic organisations, student organisations, youth groups, community structures and trade unions in response to the establishment of the tri-cameral parliament. Initially, therefore the UDF's first campaigns were against elections to new *ethnic* parliaments as well as urban local councils and later the tri-cameral body (Khorommbi, 2001: 202).

The first branches of the UDF were formed in May 1983 but the front itself was officially launched in July of the same year in the Transvaal, Cape Province and the Natal Regions as a non-racial body (Lemon, 1987: 337; Seideman, 1984: 71). Reminiscent of the relationship between black South African students and their privileged white counterparts, Lebelo (2019: 11) posits that the white liberals used the UDF as a Trojan horse to claw their way back into the centre of black South African politics and struggles unchallenged. Thus one should read a sign of desperation among black South African activists to the point of breaking away from NUSAS at some point earlier but later allow the same white liberals into their political struggle fold without any opposition; maybe with the hope that this might prove beneficial to a certain degree. It was not surprising that some white liberals postured as "the new radicals" who in 'Judas Iscariot's' character condemned the black South Africa's radicalism as articulated in Biko's BC's philosophy as unscientific and fascist (Lebelo, 2019: 11). The current researcher would like to argue that this was a case of 'the kettle calling the pot black' and also denudes what this study pointed out earlier about the white liberals not being first witness victims of oppression in the same way that the black South African majority had been experiencing for years.

Be that as it may the news of the formation of the UDF filtered through to the rural areas, and the Bantustan homelands in particular, through print media and dissemination of information by the majority of the activist youth and students from the Witwatersrand. These students were still encouraged to attend school in Venda by their parents, far from the madding crowd of urban politics, regardless of hostels having been closed permanently in the homeland. Omer-Cooper (1987: 236) accentuates the preceding statements by contending that coming as it did at a time of economic downturn and heightened hardships, the UDF sparked off a massive wave of violence in the African townships comparable to that beginning in Soweto in 1976. This would imply that besides many youth having fled into exile in neighbouring countries, South Africa still experienced a groundswell of political opposition and activism from the general populace, with the youth and students pumping in the zeal.

On the readiness of the youth and students and their affinity to the new political platform (UDF), Randitsheni (interviewed on 11 September 2019) postulates that this was accentuated by the fact that the former members of the defunct VIPP of Venda had drawn closer to the general political opposition to the system such that the UDF immediately enjoyed their affinity. Most of these youths were students and unemployed secondary school-leavers ranging from early teens to mid-twenties (Khorommbi, 2001: 202). Randitsheni (interviewed on 11 September 2019) further avers that as a result, the VIPP had established a foundation during its period of opposition to Patrick Mphahlele's traditionalist party of the VNP such that the UDF found the ground within the 'RoV' fertile for political activism, effective political education and mobilisation among the youth and students. In response the South African government posted soldiers to teach at the 'RoV's secondary schools and colleges of education regardless of them not having the necessary qualifications as they were fresh from passing matric examinations. By implication, *mahosi* derived their power from their viciousness, protected by an equally vicious apartheid system, leaving the rural people with a few options but to comply (Ntsebenza, 1999: 85). This instilled fear and docility because these soldiers always carried firearms into classes as part of the state of emergency laws of the day (Randitsheni, interviewed 11 September 2019). However, these moves did not dampen the spirit and resolve of black South Africans to challenge the repressive, suppressive, murderous, brutal and

dictatorial system. In the words of Murphy Morobe referring to the efforts of the system to break the back of the UDF during that time (Seeking, 2000: 202):

But the UDF power basis is at the local level, where there is more intimate contact with the community... So far they have failed to enforce the quiescence they desire... Students are becoming angrier by the day and the effects of that anger are being carried over to the rest of the community.

The thrust of all these is that the leadership of the UDF was able to make inroads into the 'RoV' by gaining a groundswell of support to render it ungovernable by enlisting the partnership of the then militant youth and students. The organisation succeeded in this by infiltrating sectors of the community such as church leaders, secondary school learners, students of Colleges of Education around Venda (Venda College of Education, Makhado College of Education, Tshisimani Training College and Ramaano College of Education) and those from Univen (Mphaphuli, interviewed on 17 January 2015; Randitsheni, interviewed on 11 September 2019). This is reminiscent of Biko's (1996: 95) prophecy that "black people must constantly pressurise the Bantustan leaders to pull out of the political *cul-de-sac* that has been created by the system." Therefore, if the June 16 protests were a turning point in the fight for political rights, they equally planted a seed towards the challenge to the legitimacy of *vuhosi* within the 'RoV', such that the UDF's politicisation of ritual murder found the ground well fertile for the challenge to the legitimacy of *mahosi* of the 'RoV'.

Therefore, it cannot be ignored that Biko and others like him died a courageous man who through his BC ideology embraced the broad liberation movement of black South Africans, which courage he was prepared to lay down his life for. To drive the point home, Thami Zwane (17 September 2019: 12) posits that "leadership without courage is like a fallen leaf blown by the wind in any direction and trampled on by everyone." Biko's teachings encouraged the youth, students, the clergy and the general populace to view the homeland leadership with a different lens and challenge its legitimacy with all they could muster. Ntsebenza (1999: 85) encapsulates this by averring that by the late 1980s and early 1990s mass mobilisation which was characteristic of most urban areas in South Africa during the 1970s and 1980s had shifted to the rural areas where

vhuhosi and institutions became the target of resistance and opposition to the homeland system. This was in contrast to the period between 1976 and 1981 when the ‘independence’ of some Bantustans did not initially alter the power relations in rural areas, although the power of *vhuhosi* institutions from *vhakoma*, *magota* and *mahosi* was strengthened somewhat. This means that the clock was ticking for *mahosi* within the homeland arena.

Significantly the establishment and influence of the UDF within the ‘RoV’ was initiated by such student/ political activists as Malaka, Dick Ralushai⁵⁴, Mphaphuli, the late George Phadagi, who later became a teacher at Mphaphuli High School and was also instrumental in the formation of the South African Democratic Teachers’ Union (SADTU) in the area, the late Sparks Ramagoma, a former MEC in the Limpopo Province, amongst others (Malaka, interviewed 4 September 2019). Other political luminaries were the late and former exile Lesley Ramabulana, half-brother of the late *Khosi* Fhumulani Peter Ramabulana Kutama.⁵⁵ These individuals had been victims of detention and expulsion from universities for their stand against the system, and Patrick Mphhephu’s regime in particular (Mphaphuli, interviewed 17 January 2015). Malaka (interviewed on 4 September 2019) says that at the time he had been expelled from the University of the North (now University of Limpopo) around 1975. He then helped establish contacts with NOTRACO, an affiliate of the UDF, through which contact with the student body at universities, amidst massive detentions both in South Africa and the ‘RoV’, was established (Malaka, interviewed on 4 September 2019). In support of this, Welsh (2009: 89) mentions that besides its Freedom Charter characteristics, the greatest impact of the UDF was at grassroots level where it created local structures that played a key role in the political education and mobilisation of the masses. Other prominent leaders who were significant and influential during the period of the UDF were Ramaphosa and Pandelani Nefolovhodwe⁵⁶, Harry Nengwekhulu⁵⁷,

⁵⁴ Dick Ralushai is the nephew of the late Professor Ralushai and a former student and political activist at Mphaphuli High School, Sibasa, north of the town of Thohoyandou.

⁵⁵ The late *Khosi* Fhumulani Peter Kutama Ramabulana was the first Chairperson of the National House of Traditional Leaders (NHTL) of South Africa.

⁵⁶ Pandelani Nefolovhodwe is the former President of the Azanian Peoples’ Organisation (of South Africa) (AZAPO), a breakaway of the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC) at the time.

⁵⁷ Dr. Harry Nengwekhulu is a former exile, an educationist and former Director-General (DG) in the

who also played a significant role in developing students and youth activism, amidst acute repression in the Bantustans, especially Bophuthatswana, Ciskei and Venda (Mphaphuli, 17 January 2015; Seekings, 2000: 273).

The period of tangible mass influence of the UDF in the 'RoV' gained momentum in 1986 when political activists in partnership with the youths, students and teachers, among others embraced the overall ideology and strategy of the UDF (Malaka, interviewed on 4 September 2019). The organisation strove to make it clear that Vhavenda had been robbed of their political, economic and social rights by the South African government as a result of the 13 September 1979 nominal 'independence'. With the assistance of the NOTRACO and the South African Youth Congress (SAYCO), the UDF was able to mobilise and organize local communities and students against the homeland system, which anti-'independence' campaign was led by the students from Univen, teacher colleges and secondary school learners under the banner of the South African National Students Congress (SANSCO) (Mphaphuli, interviewed on 17 January 2015). Predictably the *mahosi*-led homeland government fingered the UDF, accusing it of misleading and negatively influencing Vhavenda youth and students against them such that the local leadership of the UDF became victims of detention, police brutality and more political repression from the 'RoV's security forces (Mphaphuli, interviewed on 17 January 2019; Randitsheni, interviewed on 11 September 2019).

Be that as it may the UDF's repression by the 'RoV' government did not dim the spirit of resilience since its draft programme spurred the youth and students to retaliate by squaring up against the security forces and destroy the property of the homeland government (Randitsheni, interviewed on 11 September 2019). The UDF resiliently proposed holding rolling mass actions in support of the demand for the 'RoV's reintegration into South Africa, as well as 'deepening and extending' the 'organisation' of those liberal traditional leaders under the Mass Democratic Movement (MDM)⁵⁸. This played a crucial role in further eroding the 'credibility', if ever there was any left,

Limpopo and Eastern Cape Provincial governments, respectively.

⁵⁸ The MDM was a broad and mass-based organizational structure which comprised all anti-apartheid movements such as the UDF, civic organisations, church groups, student and youth bodies.

of the apartheid structures such as *mahosi*-led administrations that had been established to stunt black South Africans' quest for a broad liberation ideal (Ntsandeni, Interviewed 22 July 2019; Seekings, 2000: 273). Therefore in Venda through the UDF, the MDM was able to spread its common ideology, belief and goal towards doing away with the 'RoV' and its oligarchic *vhuhosi* leadership as it considered it a stumbling block to the total liberation of South Africa (George Tshabuse⁵⁹, interviewed on 13 March 2014). To its credit the UDF was instrumental in the formation of various broad-based organisations in the 'RoV' which included church leaders, students, youth, *mahosi*, parents, professionals and teachers. Some of these were the Northern Transvaal Youth Congress (NOTYCO), SANSCO, CONTRALESA, Parents Teachers and Students Association (PTSA) and NOTRACO, among others (Malaka, interviewed 4 September 2019; Mphaphuli, interviewed 17 January 2015). The proximity of Vhavanḁa students and the youth to the politically streetwise groups from the Witwatersrand, and the use of print media also had a profound impact on student and youth politics in Venda. This made the area to be one of the homelands where the UDF played an active role as a pressure group in fighting against the oppressive apartheid homeland system (Randitsheni, interviewed 11 September 2019).

Equal to the task were the rural, loyal, respecting, acquiescent, traditionalistic and African value centred and influenced Vhavanḁa populace, who by that time had been transformed into a political force that was ready to challenge the oppressive machinery of the 'RoV' at whatever cost. Malaka (Interviewed on 4 September 2019) adds that the presence of the UDF within Vhavanḁa homeland even enjoyed the support from leaders such as the late Winnie Mandela, Alan Boesak, Archbishop Desmond Tutu, and the late Samson Ndou⁶⁰, among others. The support of this leadership emboldened Vhavanḁa activists to soldier on and challenge the legitimacy of the 'RoV' government. In this regard these leaders assisted in the establishment of an operational centre at Maungani Lutheran Centre where political meetings were held in

⁵⁹ At the time of the interview George Tshabuse was a teacher at Shayandima Secondary School, Shayandima township, north-east of T̄hohoyanḁou, in the Thulamela Local Municipality of the VDM.

⁶⁰ The late Samson Ratshivhanda Nḁou, an activist of note in the area later became a Member of Parliament (MP) at national level, later a member of the Limpopo Provincial Legislature (MPL), who also served and an MEC for Safety and Security in Limpopo Provincial government.

the guise of social gatherings like 'braais', where strategies were discussed to challenge the oppressive system within the 'RoV' (Malaka, interviewed on 4 September 2019; Mphaphuli, interviewed on 17 January 2015).

What followed were years of political implosion against oppression and suppression which was characterised by widespread vandalism, wherein the 'RoV' it was mainly pronounced as resistance against the *mahosi*-led homeland government. The influence of liberation ideology against the 'RoV' regime painted a picture of the envisaged exclusion of *vhuhosi* and institutions in the future political dispensation by the broad liberation movement in view of *mahosi* being in bed with the oppressive, suppressive and brutal apartheid regime (Musitha, 1 July 2019; Ntsandeni, 22 July 2019). In response to this, and with the assistance of spies and security police, in order to quell the unrest Patrick Mphaphu adhered to the tactic of establishing more youth 're-education' centres throughout the 'RoV'. These were meant to counter the spread and threat of the UDF, which tactics were accompanied by transferring and/ or dismissals of recalcitrant activist teachers as well as school principals, while those who remained loyal were promoted to the soon to be vacant positions of headmasters, inspectors of schools, senior government positions or senior positions in youth centres (Khangala, 1999: 97). However, the majority of students in the 'RoV' were not swayed from their political resolve but remained loyal to the ideals of the UDF by joining more rival political organisations such as the NOTYCO and the SAYCO, affiliates of the UDF (VG, Le Roux, 1989/ 90: 192-202; *Thohoyandou* Newspaper, 26 April 1988: 1).

Therefore any situation that presented itself was taken advantage of to challenge the legitimacy of *mahosi* in the homeland government, especially since they had been unclothed of the cultural and traditional image that used to make them aligned to African values, and enjoy the allegiance, loyalty as well as respect from their subjects. This means that although to challenge *vhuhosi* was like unchartered territory in the past, their homeland image had been *mahosi's* own undoing. The result was that young activists engaged in politicising Vhavenda by engineering stay-aways, organising the unemployed youth to stay away from the annual 13 September 'independence' celebrations, with the response from the 'RoV' government being mass arrests of the youth, students and pastors, among others, especially the UDF leaders in the homeland, as they were accused of misleading the youth and students

(Mphaphuli, interviewed on 17 January 2015). Patrick Mphephu was able to always stay ahead of the activists, who he viewed as enemies of the homeland establishment plotting his demise, by running the entire civil service as a network of spies and informers (VG: Commission of Inquiry into Venda Vhuhosi Affairs, 2(2), 1990/1991: 174).

The solidarity built around the UDF became much evident, especially during the post-Patrick Mphephu era when people in general were up in arms against the historically tolerated practice of ritual murders that were prevalent in the 'RoV' (Nyambeni Victor Mulaudzi, interviewed on 15 January 2013). Mphaphuli (interviewed on 17 January 2015) affirms that the significance of the UDF as a broad-based organisation had a tremendous impact in Venda, especially inasmuch as the youth, student and civic organisations imbued its ideals such that they aligned themselves to its affiliates. Malaka (Interviewed 4 September 2019) further reverts to the main focus of the UDF, which was in opposition to and pushed for the downfall of the corrupt, suppressive and oppressive *mahosi*-led government, a shadow of its former African value grounded leadership. However, besides the main focus of the UDF being to intensify the project of liberation within the country, it was clear that there was no way in which the homelands and their corrupt and autocratic *mahosi* could be excluded from the liberation equation. The UDF organised a massive campaign of rejecting the Bantustan system and by making Venda ungovernable through strikes, boycotts (which included the boycott of white owned shops like Shoprite and OK Bazaar) through the solidarity with students and youth activists (Mphaphuli, interviewed on 17 January 2019; Musandiwa, 2014: 47 and 52; *Thohoyandou* Newspaper, 7 July 1989).

The mass boycotts affected the normal flow of the economy and service delivery within the civil service while as a response thereto Patrick Mphephu continued with his spree of demoting and transferring 'unc-operative' senior officials and regularly reshuffled his cabinet. The promotion of loyal supporters to senior positions without taking into consideration their qualifications, experience and merit aggravated the situation since it led to poor morale and uncertainty among Vhavana (VG: Le Roux Report 1989/ 90: 178-180). Patrick Mphephu believed that the building of the power base of loyalists through promotions and planting loyalists as spies everywhere in government circles would weaken the political resolve from the opposition and instil fear among the youth,

students and other political activists. In turn, *mahosi* were accused of using tax money for private benefit such as buying houses and cars such that by the late 1980s many rural dwellers seized the opportunity of the militancy to call for the overthrow of *mahosi* and the dissolution of *vhuhosi* institutions (Malaka, interviewed on 4 September 2019; Randitsheni, interviewed on 11 September 2019; Fokwang, 2003: 45).

For their part young activists, led by students from Univen and sister colleges of education, conducted a mass student boycott which included secondary school learners throughout the 'RoV', attacking government offices and destroying many government buildings, and demanded for the scrapping of the Venda administration, the dissolution of its status as a Bantustan and its reintegration into South Africa (Mphaphuli, interviewed 17 January 2015; Randitsheni, interviewed 11 September 2019; Musandiwa, 2014: 53). According to Ntsandeni (interviewed on 22 July 2019) student and youth militancy demonstrated the powerlessness of the homeland authorities to the point that *mahosi* as deemed oppressive authorities were reduced to onlookers and could not dare challenge this new breed of 'comrades'⁶¹ or *makhomureidi* (in Tshivenda), as they were called or equally referred to themselves. The actions of 'comrades' are explicitly chronicled in the discussions on witchcraft related ritual murders, witch-hunting and witch-burning activities that follow below in the next section of the study. Included in the discussion is how the response to ritual killings cases were politicised and used as a springboard to bring the 'RoV' to its knees.

6.4 The 'RoV' as the Epicentre of the Brutality and Ruthlessness of Ritual Murder: Its Politicisation as the 'RoV's Death-knell

Munthali (2005: 35) is of the view that when cultural interests are threatened it is possible to resort to seeking blood to achieve the communal stability in the quest to control people and the elements of nature, such that culture dictates that sacrifices are done. Flowing from this the current researcher deemed it prudent to discuss the role of ritual murder in the political situation within the 'RoV' during Patrick Mphephu's rule

⁶¹ 'Comrades'/ *amacomrades*/ *makhomureidi* were usually students and youth activists who usually ran amok influenced by mob psychology such that nothing could stand in their way.

and, especially, after his death. This in order to traverse towards the role played by the community, the youth and student activism in demonising and challenging the role of and the perpetual existence of the homeland, wherein *mahosi* were generally and openly accused of complicity in this animalistic act. In the same vein this is because ritual murder was the most contentious issue during the era of the 'RoV' and was shamelessly oftentimes claimed by the homeland's senior government officials, the *mahosi*-led government and other *mahosi* to be a culturally accepted practice by Vhavenda (Musitha, interviewed on 1 July 2019; Randitsheni, interviewed on 11 September 2019; Maṭhagu, 1990: 3; Fokwang, 2001: 203).

Randitsheni (2015: 19, quoting Labuschagne, 2004) explains ritual murder as an act of murder in which body parts are removed from a victim while the person is still alive, for the sole purpose of superstitiously using them medicinally with the help of a traditional healer (*nanga* in Tshivenda). In simple terms two concepts have been juxtaposed to give the act a distinct meaning, which are ritual and murder: which means killing for ritual purposes. According to Randitsheni (2015: 14) culturally and traditionally a ritual is regarded as a good thing to perform or as something more positive because it is engaged in order to achieve a particular objective. Be that as it may the current researcher contends that this is a brutally evil act of murder which is against natural law as it constitutes the termination of someone's life: the most precious gift from God. To drive this point home Munthali (2005: 1) explains it as traumatic ritual murder, a phenomenon which is a global problem and a national issue in South Africa, especially around the Venda area. It is worth noting that Munthali (2005: 3) adds an adjective to the concept 'ritual murder' in order to qualify it because life is sniffed out of the victim's body while he/ she feels excruciating pain being inflicted, hence the perfect way to describe it would be a heinous act. In Tshivenda it is called "*u via*" such that the sound of the Vena concept can send a chill down anyone's spine and develop vile abhorrence towards the perpetrators of the act.

The perpetrators of this cruel act of "*u via*" are categorised as *mahosi*, businesspeople, traditional healers and politicians by some sources: Le Roux, 1989/ 90; Khangala, 1990; Maṭhagu, 1990; Ralushai, 1996; Munthali, 2005; Tshamano, 2005⁶²;

⁶² Humbulani Tshamano's work is a Master's degree research based on the plight of women at Fefe

Randitsheni, 2015). Randitsheni (2015: 15, quoting from Ottawa, 2005) further explains the victims of ritual murder as people who cannot defend themselves, appear to be physically and intellectually strong, the majority of who are women and children, especially from poor families. In other words the most socio-economically disadvantaged and vulnerable members of the community have been found to be the usual victims of and the most affected by ritual murder. In the same vein Randitsheni (2015: 61) outlines the motives for ritual murder in the Vhembe District (ironically the largest part of the former 'RoV' area). This author lists the following as some of the motives for ritual murder: the quest for power and authority by *mahosi* who are always in search of strength as well as supernatural/ religious power; preparing for war; increasing support for membership, for example attracting people to a specific church; the garnering of votes for victory by politicians during elections; attracting wealth, which includes the need for money; increase in crop production; for use during traditional practices such as the installation of a *khosi*; the burial of a *khosi* or any member of the royal family; calling for a successful circumcision period; appeasing the ancestors for the restoration of peace in the land and superstition as generally known reasons for such heinous acts (See also VG: Le Roux, 1989/ 90:192-202; Munthali, 2005: 3; Khangala, 1990: 2-3; Mathagu, 1990: 3-5, 17-19; Khorommbi, 2001: 203; Randitsheni, interviewed on 11 September 2019; *Thohoyandou*, 26 April 1988: 1; *Thohoyandou*, 7 July 1989; 1).

While this brief discussion on ritual murder is not the focus of this study or even this chapter, it suffices to say that the current researcher's objective was to psych the reader on the true nature of the practice. It was also necessary to factor it in because regardless of the shameless claim by the powerful elite within the 'RoV' of it being part of Vhavanḁa culture and traditional practice by royalty, at the height of the period of the 'RoV', during the late 1980s and the early 1990s, people revolted against the practice at political platforms by invoking its brutality and traumatic nature. Through

Village, north of the town of Thohoyandou, within the Thulamela Municipality in the VDM of the Limpopo Province of South Africa, where he was born and bred. In the absence of their migrant worker husbands the politicized and 'enlightened' women of FeFe Village took it upon themselves to fight patriarchy, with some offering themselves for imprisonment in the thick of things because they were tired of being victims of ritual murder, witch-hunting and witchburning as well as being accused of witchcraft. See also the opening of section 6.4 of this chapter and the list of References.

the abuse of power and the manipulation of government institutions by Patrick Mphahlele and his cohorts, the 'RoV' became the epicentre of ritual murder, accusations of witchcraft, witch-hunting and witch-burning, as these events escalated wherein cabinet ministers, *mahosi* and other senior government officials were alleged to be using such practices to achieve power and prestige (Randitsheni, 11 September 2019; Straker, 1992: 58; *Thohoyandou*, 7 July 1989: 1). In support of this Tshamano (2005: 1) accentuates the previous statement when he advances that the spread of witchcraft-related violence more pronounced and widespread during the late 1980s and the early 1990s in the Limpopo Province, especially Venda (the Far Northern Transvaal region). Whereas the well-known perpetrators of ritual murder have been listed above, those of witch-hunting and witch-burning were 'comrades', hailed as heroes and heroines, wherein many people lost their lives in the ensuing violence. The actions of 'comrades' were fuelled by the reluctance of the homeland government to act on these brutalities (Tshamano, 2005: 40; Mahosi and Tshamano, 2012: 1).

6.4.1 The impact of the upsurge of ritual murder cases within the 'RoV'

During the early 1980s in the 'RoV' a deputy minister in Patrick Mphahlele's cabinet, *Khosi* Frank Booi Ramovha was accused of the ritual murder of a school teacher (Mathagu, 1990: 21). In order to send a message across that he was against such cruel and violent acts against humanity and to use it as a deterrent, Patrick Mphahlele sentenced him to death along with his co-accused (Khangala, 1999: 88). However, a number of cases occasionally followed down the years of his 'life presidency' during which some of those implicated never met their fate or their day in court, showing that the homeland leadership was not prepared to or even-handed in handling such cases. Following this a number of individuals met their creator in the same brutal and heinous manner, especially between 1980 and 1990. Vhavanḁa generally believed that this uneven-handedness in dealing with ritual murder was being used to protect *mahosi* who were oftentimes fingered for these evil deeds with no consequences (Randitsheni, interviewed 11 September 2019; (Mathagu, 1990: 30). This is how contentious the issue was and it is no wonder that the prevalence of ritual murder cases prepared ground for widespread protests, which became political and contributed to the collapse of the 'RoV', as violent protest continued to spread.

As if that was not enough, after Patrick Mphhephu's death in 1988 leading to the period towards the democratisation of South Africa, which coincided with and overlapped into the release of political prisoners, Venda experienced an upsurge in ritual murder cases and witchcraft-related accusations, more than ever before in the history of the 'RoV'. At the time Patrick Mphhephu's successor, Gota Ravele, was restructuring his cabinet such that a number of individuals vied for a stake in ministerial and senior government positions (Khangala, 1999: 86). Ntsandeni (interviewed on 22 July 2019) argues that during this time the Mphhephu-Ramabulana group undermined Ravele's authority inasmuch as they regarded him as a junior and not a direct descendant of their own dynasty, which set his authority to be immediately challenged, and thus making him to have no leg to stand on. Ravele could be excused for having inherited a poisoned chalice because he became the head of the 'RoV' at the height of tensions caused by the mysterious death of Patrick Mphhephu, this being accompanied by the widespread militancy of the youth and students who had already been ideologised by Biko's teachings, the 1976 students uprisings and UDF activities.

Unfortunately for him, Ravele's was a period that was engulfed by unsolved ritual murder cases that implicated senior government officials and ministers (Ntsandeni, interviewed on 22 July 2019). According to the "Truth Commission Special Report" (1990: n.p.) these events made *mahosi* and government officials to become sources of both social and political discontent among Vhavanḁa and within the 'RoV'. Given this scenario the UDF played a significant role by organising the youth and students to rise up and fight against the homeland regime. *Mahosi* were therefore seen as a category ripe for eradication in the face of widespread ritual murders, to the point that by 1986 already the UDF alleged that democratically elected village councils should replace *mahosi*-dominated councils since it was obvious that *vuhosi* would soon be relegated to the annals of history (Fokwang, 2003: 46; cited from Van Kessel, 2000).

Other names that were fingered for ritual killings were those of ministers such as Mpfumedzeni Milton Mphaphuli (then known as M.M.) and Aḁidzulwi Alfred (BTS 1/237/3, vol. 1: B8 13 April- E8, 22 April 1988: 3; Ralushai, 1989: 180-184; Mathagu, 1990: 30). Aḁidzulwi Alfred was accused of acts of ritual murder of several individuals with no consequences, such that this later led to his resignation as a minister when political pressure mounted (Munthali 2005: 3). To aggravate the situation, in the

homeland investigations related to such cases that implicated high-ranking officials and ministers were never completed such that this raised suspicions of cover-ups. It was not long before the situation reached boiling point such that it was a powder-keg waiting to explode (Khangala, 1990: 21; Mathagu, 1990: 30). This means that Ravele took over as 'president' of the 'RoV' at a time when there was an increasing demand for an end to apartheid rule and the abandonment of the homeland system in the face of the emergence of civic organisations in the villages; which had an enormous impact on the stability within the "RoV". Mathagu (1990: 23) adds that during cases of ritual murder, bribery and vague promises were used by high-ranking officials to entice poor and unemployed people to assist them in expediting these murder plots. When these witnesses came out into the open a number of *magota* and *mahosi* were chased away from their villages while others sought refuge at police stations throughout the 'RoV'; further testimony of how seriously they had fallen by the wayside regarding their legitimacy, respect and loyalty within their communities (Ralushai, 1989: 202).

As a result the spread of witchcraft related accusations and ritual murders became the order of the day as Ravele's failure to quell the spiralling situation further inflamed the anger of Vhavenda to boiling point (Khangala, 1990: 32; Fokwang, 2003: 41). Fokwang (2003: 41) adds that the anger against *mahosi* accumulated and made many rural communities who used to abide by African values that defined their relationship with *mahosi*, to seize the opportunity presented by the militancy of the UDF and other affiliated structures to call for the overthrow of *mahosi* and the obliteration of *vuhosi* institutions (Fokwang, 2003: 45). Mathagu (1990: 30) supports the claim that the spread of ritual murder incidents was fuelled by the fact that Ravele was about to restructure his cabinet and *mahosi* were anticipating placement in the new administration such that the number of those vying for positions was overwhelming. According to Mahuluhulu (interviewed on 6 August 2019), around Tshakhuma where ritual murder cases had been reported, soldiers patrolled the neighbouring villages, ironically not to protect the villagers but to disperse any gatherings that may be organised to plan stay-aways and school boycotts. This further made the youth and students distrust the security forces and led to the spread of lawlessness where they also formed rampant youth movements with the primary aim to purge all suspects of witchcraft and ritual murder through kangaroo interrogations (Mathagu, 1990: 33).

6.4.2 The outbreak and spread of cases of witch-hunting and witch-burning:

The gradual demise of the power of *mahosi* within the 'RoV'

Cases of ritual murder bred a political culture within the 'RoV' such that the politicization of the youth and students gained momentum, especially after the death of Patrick Mphephu, a situation which was conducive for radical organizations such as the ANC, UDF, PAC and AZAPO to radicalise the youth and students under the umbrella of SAYCO and Students Representative Councils (SRCs) of secondary schools (Mathagu, 1990: 66-67; Lemon, 1987: 332). The result was an increase in political unrest and mobilisation within the 'RoV' rendered the area a security risk since it was engulfed in political instability (Musandiwa, 2014: 58; Randitsheni, interviewed on 11 September 2019). Popular demands for these cases to either be followed up, resolved and those implicated to face the full might of the law became the order of the day from school learners, university students, church leaders, workers in general and the general public amidst school and worker boycotts as well as stay-aways that engulfed the homeland (Le Roux, 1988: 28). As such the 'RoV's *mahosi*-led government was caught in the web of intrigue of unimaginable proportions which was predictably an architect of its downfall as this ballooned into widespread witch-hunting and witch-burning activities, during which the youth and student activists summarily executed those accused of either witchcraft and ritual murder, at the back of which they called for the demise of the homeland government (Ralushai, 1989: 240; Khangala, 1990; Mathagu, 1990; Khorombi, 2001; Munthali, 2005; Tshamano, 2005).

According to Malaka (interviewed on 4 September 2019) ritual murder was deliberately politicised to galvanise Vhavenda to stand up against *mahosi* and the *mahosi*-led homeland government. Ironically by this time the UDF faced a difficult task of convincing the youth, students and community leaders to desist from engaging in acts of witch-hunting and witch-burning. Randitsheni (interviewed on 11 September 2019) remarks that during incidents of witch-hunting and witch-burning, in most cases those who fell victim to the hunting and burning met their fateful destiny as a result of mob psychology since it was difficult to prove any involvement in witchcraft. Therefore the change in the approach by the UDF could not be faulted since the organisation wanted to dispel the notion that it was a violent and hell-bent on inflicting unwarranted pain

and the wanton suffering that led to fatalities on anyone, inasmuch as its focus was to fight against and dismantle the abhorrent system of apartheid and the *ethnic* homelands.

Regardless of this the UDF was vilified by the *mahosi*-led government as a group of murderers who were engaged in neck-lacing⁶³ performed by young 'comrades', who during witch-hunting and witch-burning expeditions were also called 'comtsosis'.⁶⁴ Delius (1996: 5) describes the 'comrades' as a group of youth of school-going age who combined with some secondary school-leaving youth of between teen to mid-twenties, sometimes including girls. In this regard Tshamano (2005: 13) and Tshamano and Mahosi (2010: 7) argue that the active participation of girls during such witchcraft-related uprisings disproves the fact that 'comrades' were young men only, although they concede that the representation of girls during such incidents might have been minimal as compared to their male counterparts. The current researcher argues that it is evident that these youngsters went on the day-to-day rampage at the back of the 'RoV's accusations of the politicization and negative influence by the UDF (BTS 1/237/3/4 Venda Ministerial Discussions background Documents, 1989: 3).

As a result the UDF found it difficult to extricate itself from the activities of these criminal elements who had either intentionally or unintentionally infiltrated the activism of its student and youthful cadres who had turned themselves into culprits: the 'comrades' who were labelled 'comtsosis' because of their unruly behaviour (Tshamano, 2005: 40; Khorommbi, 2001: 202-203). Khangala (1990: 6) argues that because of their unruly behaviour those who despised them are/ were the ones who coined the concept 'comtsosis' as they were viewed at with an evil and destructive

⁶³ Neck-lacing was the practice during political struggles in South Africa where those who were accused of being sell-outs or spies were then subjected to lynching by placing a petrol-soaked tyre around their necks and set alight as part of punishment.

⁶⁴ While 'comrade' is/ was a general concept attached to anybody involved in political activism at the time, 'comtsosi' referred to those students and youth who were involved in acts of vandalism, witch-hunting and witch-burning which resulted in numerous loss of life. The concept 'comtsosi' was coined as a result of the irresponsible manner in which these youth went about their activities such that they were accused of operating under the influence of the 'tsotsi' element of hooliganism. This group was apparently worlds apart from the class of 1976/ 1977 in focus and objectives.

lens. Regardless of this Malaka (Interviewed on 4 September 2019) and Randitsheni (Interviewed on 11 September 2019) are in concert that the UDF effortlessly worked to convince the youth and students that the elephant in the room was the oppressive system under the 'RoV' homeland government of *mahosi* and apartheid, more so because it was *mahosi* who were generally implicated in most reports of ritual murder (VG: Le Roux, 1989/ 90; Ralushai, "Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Witchcraft Violence and Ritual Murders in the Northern Province of the Republic of Venda, 1996).

However, by this time even the majority of communities around Venda who were generally rural bound, especially women, and were generally supposedly closer to the traditional/ patriarchal system became resistant to willy-nilly accept the generation to generation gospel of the relevance of ritual murder and witchcraft as being part of the social fabric and values of *vhuhosi* and institutions. According to Tshamano (2005: 43 and 46; 43 cited from Schmidt, 1992) historically women occasionally featured as informants due to the fact that gender had not been incorporated into the historical analysis as a result of patriarchal dominance which contributed to their social and political invisibility. This author further posits that this was regardless of the fact that women oftentimes held considerable influence and status within their families and communities, especially in land tenure systems and land administration in the absence of their migrant worker husbands. Tshamano (2005: 46) avers that this outlook on rural Vhavenda women drastically changed at the height of witch-hunting and witch-burning incidents since their outlook on life was drastically transformed.

Although government officials within the 'RoV' continued to claim the relevance of ritual murder in the life of Vhavenda and that it was allegedly used to appease the 'ancestors', at the height of witch-hunting and witch-burning incidents in the 'RoV', the tide had turned as a result of the politicization process that had taken root during the 1980s and 1990s. An example of such a change in the belief systems is once more aptly captured by Tshamano (2005) who relates experiences of a rural community, the majority of who were women, who in 1990 rose up against the powers that be to show their discontent and stand up against the *mahosi*-led 'RoV'. According to this author these women accused the 'RoV' government of deliberately ignoring the impact of ritual murder on the social fabric of rural community life, such that such statements from senior government officials only further inflamed political activism and education.

The other side of the coin is that the UDF actually found itself in a quandary because it could not just alienate *mahosi* willy-nilly because some of them were regarded as 'comrades' and equally victims of the system. In such cases the leadership of the UDF got involved in calming the situation through its proximity to the 'comrades'. Be that as it may, while the youth accused *mahosi*, both within and outside the 'RoV' administration, of being in favour of the apartheid administration as a resented system, the rapid increase in ritual murder cases presented Vhavenḁa with a platform to voice their resentment of the system by engaging in the abhorrent witch-hunting and witch-burning (Randitsheni, interviewed on 11 September 2019; Tshamano, 2005: 49). As a result Ravele had no option but to publicly impress on Vhavenḁa in the media that the homeland government was against the spate of ritual murders, and the practice in particular, and went to the extent of inviting church leaders to join hands with him to address these evil ills (Musandiwa, 2014: 60; *Thohoyandou*, 9 February 1990).

According to Delius (1996: 196) witch-hunting and witch-burning activities were catalysed by the swinging of the pendulum in South Africa's political landscape when the ANC and other political organizations within the liberation movement were unbanned in February 1990, such that people used whatever means at their disposal for mass mobilisation, with witch-hunting and witch-burning finding resonance in the 'RoV' to fight for the demise of the oppressive system. Munthali (2005: 3) also posits that originally the tasks of *mahosi* had been to protect their people but they no longer cared about the well-being of their subjects but had involved themselves in patronage and corruption; this which made them to compete for material things to the point of allegations of engaging in wide-spread ritual killings. The result was that in the 'RoV' the fight against the *mahosi*-led homeland government took root as ritual murder was used as a weapon, during which time the release of political prisoners emboldened Vhavenḁa to challenge the status quo by making the 'RoV' ungovernable with the SAYCO at the forefront (Malaka, interviewed on 4 September 2019; Randitsheni, interviewed on 11 September 2019; Tshamano, 2005: 50; Minnaar, Offringa and Payze, 1991: 55).

Through the use of freedom songs wherein Tshivhenḁa words/ lyrics replaced the usual politically-charged lyrical content, the SAYCO succeeded in rallying people around its opposition to the homeland system. Tshamano (2005: 50) advances that the thrust of

freedom songs was that they were an important rallying point towards a cause because they were sung during community and political struggles of the apartheid days to mobilise support and spread the message across. Tshamano (2005: 50) further avers that freedom songs were easy to teach because they appealed to even the less politically conscious section of the community. In the 'RoV' the responsibility to teach such songs was carried by the comrades', the majority of who had learnt these songs during political gatherings at schools, especially at institutions of higher learning such as Univen: which songs helped to form a bond among the people in political solidarity (Tshamano, 2005: 50). An example of such freedom songs is given by Musandiwa (2014: 59) wherein one such song protests about ritual killings: "*A huna mulalo Venda*" literally meaning that "There is no peace in Venda" as a result of ritual killings. This obviously and strongly contrasted the so-called national anthem of the 'RoV' which implores the Almighty to grant Vhavenḁa "*pfano, vhuthihi, na mulalo*" literally meaning "harmony, unity and peace" (Republic of Venda Constitution Act (Act no. 9 of 1979): 36), which had been undermined and compromised by the custodians of *Ubuntu/ vhuthu* who were *mahosi*.

Within the same context one then sees how Vhavenḁa women were not to be left behind as they used the *tshigombela* dance (performed exclusively by women) as a satirical vehicle to spread social protest during the turbulent years of the 1980s; wherein they strongly criticised the 'RoV' government for its corruption and oppression, thereby helping to shape public political awareness prior to the 'military coup' of 1990. An example of such a satirical expression is found in the lyrics "*ro neta nga u tshinela mahosi: madi a hu na, na mavhone a hu na*" literally meaning "we are tired of dancing for *mahosi*, we have no water and no electricity" (Kruger, 1994: 62). This represented a far-cry from the days during which these women performed for *mahosi* during such occasional events as organized by the homeland government without any protest. This shows how deeply embedded the culture of political education had spread among the rural communities such that to them this represented the fact that culture and royalty had been polarised by the modernity of governance. It is no wonder that Ravele appointed a commission of inquiry to look into the instability within the 'RoV', which came to be known as the "Le Roux Commission on Ritual Murder and Investigations into Witchcraft-related Incidents" (VG: Le Roux, 1989/ 90; Malaka, 4 September 2019; Randitsheni, 11 September 2019). However, this did not diffuse opposition to the

existence of the homeland government as a result of the mistrust that had been implanted after years of oppression under Patrick Mphahlele, M.M., A.A. and a number of their cohorts. Of essence is that the die was cast for the homeland regime which was still hell-bent on detaining political activists, hence the continued mistrust (Magwedzha, interviewed on 17 January 2015; Musitha, interviewed on 1 July 2019; Randitsheni, interviewed on 11 September 2019).

Accompanied by the release of political prisoners, these rapid political events assisted in drawing some of these *mahosi* closer to mass political organisation, especially after the MDM was formed as a flagship to bring all the various political structures under one umbrella body so as to confront the scourge of apartheid and the impact of homeland policy. According to Ntsandeni (interviewed on 22 July 2019) the emergence of the MDM played an important role in eroding apartheid and respect for *vuhosi*, if by any chance *mahosi* ever enjoyed any legitimacy within the 'RoV', since they enforced it with power instead of authority with the assistance of the security forces and spies. Be that as it may the road to democracy had been prepared. Ultimately the Pretoria government manipulated the political climate within the 'RoV' to make it look like a bloodless *coup d'état* had been staged by one Colonel Gabriel Ramushwana (Minnaar, Offringa and Payze, 1991: 56). Immediately after assuming office in the 'Council of National Unity (CNU) Ramushwana promised to eradicate all acts of intimidation within the 'RoV', emphasised the essence of freedom of choice as well as speech and committed himself to appointing a Commission of Inquiry into ritual murder, corruption and nepotism; headed by one L. Taylor (Ntsandeni, interviewed on 22 July 2019; Mathagu, 1990: 76; *Thohoyandou*, 11 May 1990: 3). Fuelled by witchcraft and ritual murder-related instabilities the 'RoV' *mahosi*-led government was dissolved following the alleged *coup d'état* (Tshabuse, interviewed on 13 March 2013; Malaka, interviewed on 4 September 2019; Musitha, interviewed on 1 July 2013).

6.4.3 The Importance of the formation of CONTRALESA

The emergence of CONTRALESA in 1987 was another watershed moment in the history of *vuhosi* in South Africa in view of the fact that *mahosi* of all 'ethnic' hues, even those who had been associated with all the ills that had afflicted rural black South Africans as a result of their collaborative stance with the regime, both the colonial and

apartheid system (Musitha, 2012: 49). At its launch the traditionalist organization had the support of only 38 (thirty-eight) *mahosi* and *magota* nationally, mostly from the former homeland of KwaNdebele and the Northern Transvaal (now generally Limpopo Province). The emergence of this traditionalist organization was an unheard of development given, *mahosi's* relationship with the racist, oppressive and oppressive regime. This however, did not dampen the newly found resolve of *mahosi* since they were vindicated when they were later equally emboldened by the unbanning of the liberation movement, especially the ANC; which they saw as a vehicle to unshackle themselves from the negative image (Fokwang, 2003: 47). In contrast was Kgosi Lucas Mangope 'President' of Bophuthatswana who defended the apartheid regime and the homeland policy to the bitter end. He even enlisted the military assistance of the Afrikaanse Weerstandsbeweging (AWB), an Afrikaner right-wing movement, when it was clear that the end for his apartheid-led homeland was nigh (Musitha, 2012: 49). As militant protests continued to burgeon within the homelands amidst unprecedented political mobilisation of students, civil servants and urban people, in the Transvaal Bantustans, the intransigent Mangope foolishly declared a State of Emergency regardless of the fact that the writing was on the wall (Seekings, 2000: 273). Regardless of these developments those *mahosi* who distinguished themselves as being progressive organised themselves, making CONTRALESA's presence felt as an affiliate of the UDF, significantly under the presidency of Nkosi Phathekile Holomisa's during the 1989/ 90 (Musitha, 2012: 49).

CONTRALESA predictably joined forces with the ANC when it was unbanned in 1990, to serve the national interests of *mahosi* and called for the dismantling of the Bantustan system (Holomisa, 2009: 15, 16, 23). Its formation was a distinct departure from tradition because traditionalists had never had an all-inclusive-*mahosi* organisation to represent them against the oppressive regime, save for them to have been part of the founding fathers of the ANC in 1912. Initially excluded from future negotiations, *mahosi* were invited to the talks because the ANC did not want to muddy its relationship with them as custodians of the rural areas and their communities. In fact the absence of both CONTRALESA and Mangosuthu Gatsha Buthelezi's Inkatha would have derailed the negotiation process for a new South Africa because of their rural constituency (Ntsebenza, 1999: 86; Holomisa, 2009: 15, 16, 23). According to Fokwang (2003: 47) some *mahosi* continued to remind the prophets of doom of their forefathers' and even

their own individual and collective efforts to keep colonialists at bay and to resist colonialism and apartheid: Makhado, Mphephu, Sekhukhune, Dingaan and Dingiswayo, to mention a few.

In its "Guidelines for a Democratic South Africa, 1990/ 91" the ANC declares that: "The institution of hereditary rulers and chiefs shall be transformed to serve the interest of the people as a whole in conformity with the democratic principles embodied in the constitution." This is a clear departure from the ANC's negative stance against *mahosi* especially after what Govan Mbeki once declared regarding the organisation's attitude towards them due to their closeness to South Africa's oppressive regime (Rugege, 1991: 165). In the same document Thando Zuma (Rugege, 1991: 165-166) contends that the question of the future position and role of *mahosi* has to be debated in the open so that there remained no suspicion of a hidden agenda on the part of the liberation movement. The change of attitude against *mahosi* was motivated by CONTRALESA's alliance with the UDF, and especially the MDM, such that this earned *mahosi* a new image of being progressive since the MDM had been regarded as an internal extension of the ANC before 1990. This further altered the attitude by the ANC towards *mahosi* which referred to its historical association with such luminaries as Nobel Prize laureate *Inkosi* Albert Luthuli and King Sabata Dalindyebo ((Rugege, 1991: 166; Santho and Sejanamane, 1991: 167)

The reconciliatory approach by the ANC stood it in good stead because during the 1994 elections CONTRALESA and most *mahosi* supported the liberation movement and with the new-found influence within their areas since the unbanning process of 1990, *mahosi* were able to rally their subjects to ensure a resounding victory for Mandela's movement. Equally most of *mahosi* had abandoned the sinking apartheid ship and drew closer to the ANC through their membership to CONTRALESA (Ntsebenza, 1999: 89). Therefore, despite the initial suspicion, CONTRALESA gained legitimacy after the ANC had explained its presence in the changing political scene as a sign that *mahosi* were coming back into the traditional political fold (Zuma, 1990: 65). While the membership of CONTRALESA swelled, especially after the unbanning of the liberation movement and the release of Mandela and others, even previously compromised *mahosi* enlisted their membership. Although this may have been regarded as opportunistic on their part, it suffices to say that the ANC's change in

attitude towards *mahosi* represented a strategic move. The ANC stood to gain politically from this because CONTRALESA mobilised the rural communities and politicised the rural masses so they could also break away from the past regarding *mahosi* and thus understand the reasons that were invested within the ANC (Rugege, 1991: 168). Shortly before the 27 April 1994 first democratic elections the 'RoV' was officially incorporated into South Africa, with the majority of its area forming part of the present VDM of the Limpopo Province, wherein the most part of Venda fused into the Makhado, Musina, and Thulamela Local Municipalities (Musitha, interviewed on 1 July 2019; Musitha, 2012: 37; *New Nation*, June 11-June 17, 1993: 9). The following section discusses the challenge of integrating *mahosi* into the new post-1990 political and democratic arrangement.

6.5 The Challenge of Integrating *Mahosi* into the New South Africa

Venter and Landsberg (2011: 8) contend that in the past South Africa's laws and regulations that were derived from the Constitutions of 1909, 1961 and 1984 were unchallengeable in a court of law because parliament was the sovereign legislative body for the country. What flows herein is that inasmuch as black South Africans were not represented in parliament they had no muscle whatsoever to challenge any offensive legislation within the confines of the law. The current researcher is inclined to believe that the road travelled, especially with the majority of *mahosi* being politically naïve, combined with their ignorance of the law and political rights, were their own undoing. A new direction of hope and expectations, and even anxiety for *mahosi*, was ushered in by the transitional Constitution of 1993, more especially the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa of 1996, which fundamentally altered South Africa's constitutional law (Venter and Landsberg, 2011: 8). According to Mufamadi (2001: 1) "by 1994 traditional leaders wanted to know about their status and role regarding governance in our new society. Needless to say, at times there had been a matter of public accusations as to whether government was serious or not about defining the role and status of the institution of traditional leadership." In this regard Mufamadi still believed and argued that in the rural areas of South Africa communities still owed allegiance to *vhuhosi* and their institutions regardless of their history; hence the author

invoked relevance thereof (Draft Discussion Paper towards a White Paper on Traditional Leadership and Institutions, 2000: 3. See also Mashele, 2002: 15).

In the same vein it would assist one to understand where the new government was headed to when then Deputy President Thabo Mbeki had envisaged turning to *mahosi* by using incentives such as rehabilitation of areas, increased stipend, words of praise and places of honour, and behind all this, the right to continue as government appointed *mahosi* (Ntsebeza, 1999: 85). This clearly shows that, generally, politicians consider *mahosi* as gullible and easily enticed by material things such that regardless of the claim to restore their original status, dignity and respect the new government showed an inkling of distrust and manipulation reminiscent to that under apartheid, while they inflicted oppression and suppression on their subjects. This shows that the damage done by years of apartheid was still going to be felt for years long after the establishment of the new South Africa.

In support of this Musiṭha (2012: 37 and 51) avers that the end of apartheid in 1994 sparked a debate on the role of *mahosi* since the transition was accompanied by the revival of the credibility of *vhuhosi* and institutions. This statement invokes a lot of controversy if one were to consider the fact that during the Bantustan years, *mahosi* had allowed themselves to be used within the parameters of an unjust system without looking at the 'whats' and 'whys' of the victimhood that visited their value laden nature. Therefore the new dawn appeared to be sounding alarm bells and to guilt-trip *mahosi* for having been accomplices in the denigration of their own status and role, throughout the years of 'Bantustanism' for lack of a better word, as salaried servants of the apartheid government; which status and role undermined their values as traditionalists. Musiṭha (2012: 51) further posits that there was lack of common understanding on what role *mahosi* should play in local government, much as they were previously regarded as custodians of the land and communnalism; which land was equally significant to the national government. Regardless of this Section 182 of the interim Constitution of the Republic of South Africa of 1993 and Chapter 12 of the final Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Act no. 109 of 1996 recognise the institution of *vhuhosi*, its role and status based on customary law. It is for this reason that the two pieces of legislation laid down the foundation for the future relationship between *mahosi* and government in a democratic South Africa (Musitha, 2012: 52).

Along these lines, in Economic Commission for Africa (ECA, 2007: 10), the pertinent 'diabolicalisation' or none thereof of *vhuhosi* and institutions, depending on which side of the fence one chooses to locate oneself, finds resonance when arguing about its relevance within South Africa's new political arrangement. Aside from its history with colonialism and apartheid oppression, *vhuhosi* is encapsulated as anachronistic, a hindrance to development and transformation, undemocratic, divisive and costly (ECA, 2007: 10). If one were to revisit the nature of *vhuhosi* and institutions during 'Bantustanisation', one could not be faulted to agree with this premise. Adding salt to the wound are the following descriptions about *mahosi* by the ECA (2007: 10):

Traditional leadership has been corrupted by colonialism and clientelism and lost its accountability to the populace. Communities under traditional leaders, as in South Africa, are subjects and not citizens of the state, an impediment to democratization. The institution heightens primordial loyalties as *mahosi* constitute... ethnic identities. This development... reduces the relevance of the state in the area of social services. Its hereditary nature renders itself incompatible with democratic governance.

Trapped within the arguments above, it would be difficult if not impossible, to disentangle oneself from this web of political intrigue that *vhuhosi* found itself. Departing from the argument that *vhuhosi* is located and closely associated with the rural community, one is inclined to raise the issue of its importance as a developmental driving force in that geographic space. If one were to argue from an Afrocentric point of view, the arguments above sound like a death wish for *vhuhosi*, as if to say its extinction would go unnoticed because *mahosi* had lost relevance in the post-1994 day and age. Within the same space *mahosi* appear on both sides of the spectrum as participants and victims of forced removals during colonialism and apartheid, the process which transformed indigenous people's perception of land and established the notion that those without land were less human (Kgari-Masondo, 2008: 87).

Kgari-Masondo (2008: 89) contends that to remove and separate people from their ancestral land is to rupture their soul, to cut off their instrument of life support. The two

statements by Kgari-Masondo are meant to qualify the relevance of the land to African/ Vhavenda values and traditional practices. Musitha (interviewed 1 July 2019) posits that the loss of land consolidated dispossession such that this further cements the fact that 'Bantustanism' inflicted a wound so difficult to heal even under the democratic order. Be that as it may Venter and Landsberg (2011: 8-9) advance that during the transition from apartheid the so-called independent Bantu homelands were reincorporated into South Africa while the self-government Bantu homelands were dissolved and in their place 9 (nine) provincial governments were established. This included the incorporation of former four "white" provincial governments under one national government, during which period the question of the place, status and role of *mahosi* in the new dispensation became imperative.

In contrast, Princess Andani Mufhiri Tshivhase⁶⁵ (2019: 10) argues that *vuhosi* in South Africa has been sidelined. She further advances that she would like to see more of *mahosi* taking part in parliamentary proceedings, where laws are made, and be recognised as part of law enforcement. What captures the current researcher's attention more is the fact that the princess posits that most youth lack traditional education and look down upon culture as it has been portrayed as boring and too strict, something that she blames on parenting in society. All in all what she accentuates is that the youth lack African/ Vhavenda values and look down upon traditional practices. Her argument about the sidelining of *mahosi* is also captured in the discussion on the Constitution of South Africa of 1996 (Act no. 109 of 1996: 93) below.

Thornhill and Cloete (2014: 38) assert that the Constitution contains specific reference to the status and role of *mahosi*, according to customary law, whereby their function is subject to any applicable legislation and customs, which include amendments to, or repeal of that legislation or those customs. The current researcher could not help but zoom on the fact that the Constitution declared that national legislation 'may' provide for a role of *mahosi* as an institution in the local sphere on matters affecting communities under their jurisdiction. The principal objective is/ was to allow *mahosi* to

⁶⁵ Princess Andani Mufhiri Tshivhase is the daughter of *Khosi* Midiyavhathu Prince Kennedy Tshivhase. At the time of the writing of this dissertation she was studying for a B.Tech degree in engineering at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology, in the Western Cape Province of South Africa.

deal with matters relating to *vhuhosi*, the role of *mahosi*, customary law and the customs of communities observing the system of customary law (Thornhill and Cloete, 2014: 38). The use of the word 'may' seems to suggest that the national legislation, and by implication national government, has no obligation to include *mahosi* in the governance equation. It is also apparent that whatever relationship that may exist between government and *mahosi*, would be one of convenience and an afterthought more so because *mahosi* are the custodians of rural life where the constituent majority of South Africans reside. In this regard government need *mahosi* one way or another. However, it becomes evident that the significance of *mahosi* matters periodically in order for them to help marshal rural communities in support for the powers that be mostly during elections. Ironically within the homeland portfolio of Chief Minister, *mahosi* were responsible for finances and traditional affairs (John Matlole Matloga,⁶⁶ interviewed telephonically on 11 September 2019). Therefore indigenous law dictated that traditional affairs fall under this portfolio and determined the powers and functions vested in *vhuhosi* in accordance with the values, customs and traditions (Republic of South Africa: Government Gazette, no. 15466, 28 January 1994: 118).

Matloga (interviewed telephonically on 11 September 2019) further mentions that the establishment of the Department of Traditional Affairs appeared to be an afterthought for the democratic government because after the demise of the homelands the portfolio was housed within the offices of respective Premiers of the Provinces. The Department of Traditional Affairs was later created as a sub-branch within the Department of Local Government and Housing (DLGH), and was ironically legislated and/ or enacted by the apartheid Black Administration Act of 1927 and 1929 (as amended) (Constitution of Republic of Venda, 1979: 40), read with the interim Constitution of South Africa of 1993 (1993: 65) and the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa 1996 (1996: 93). This development represented a mockery inasmuch as the democratic government had vowed to restore the position, status, role, functions and dignity of *vhuhosi*, lost due to the colonial and apartheid system, yet it still invoked an apartheid legislation to do so.

⁶⁶ At the time of writing this dissertation John Matlole Matloga was a senior administrative officer (SAO) in the Limpopo Province Department of Traditional Affairs.

The Council of Traditional Leaders Act 31 of 1994 provided for the establishment of the National House of Traditional Leaders Act of 1997 which expedited the later establishment of provincial houses (Constitution of 1996: 93). Thiathu Godfrey Netshanzhe⁶⁷ (Interviewed telephonically on 4 September 2019) says that the Limpopo Provincial House of Traditional Leaders (LPHTL) was established in 1996. The Limpopo Province boasts three dominant cultural/ language groups of Bapedi, Vatsonga/ Machangana and Vhavenda such that this premises that transparency has to be employed when it comes to representation within the executive. Equally, Part 6 of the Municipal Structures Act provides for the participation of *mahosi* in municipal councils because they traditionally observe a system of customary law in the demarcated area (Netshanzhe, interviewed on 04 September 2019). As such *mahosi* may participate through the proceedings of the council of that municipality, and those participating *mahosi* must be 'allowed' to attend and participate in any meeting of the council (Thornhill and Cloete, 2014: 38). Thus the fact that they are 'allowed' to participate further suggests that the onus for them to participate in council meetings lies with the municipality(ies) such that it also suggests that *mahosi* are not considered as equal partners in local government affairs. This vindicates Princess Tshivhase's assertion that *mahosi* have been sidelined.

In support of this notion Thornhill and Cloete (2014: 39) accentuate this by asserting that *mahosi* have not been fully integrated into the system of local government since the democratisation of South Africa in 1994. In addition, the fact that the 1996 Constitution (1996: 93) provides for the remuneration of *mahosi* in terms of the Remuneration Act (Act no. 37) of the Constitution of 1996 (1996: 93) further shows that after 1994 *mahosi* continued to be salaried employees of the state and are still at the mercy of the government of the day. This is further proof that not much has changed regarding how the government looks at *vhuhosi* and institutions, save to say that they may be treated better before the law.

⁶⁷ At the time of writing this dissertation Thiathu Godfrey Netshanzhe was Secretarial Officer for the Limpopo Province House of Traditional Leaders (HTL).

Adding salt to the wound is the fact that in the provinces, and in accordance with Schedule 6 and by notice of a *Provincial Gazette*, an MEC for local government has the power to identify *mahosi* who may participate in the proceedings of a municipal council, the number of which may not exceed 10% (ten percent) of the total number of councillors in the council (Thornhill and Cloete, 2014: 39). This obviously opens a loophole for *ethnic* bias and favouritism because the incumbent MEC may: firstly, provide for a system of rotational participation of *mahosi*; secondly, regulate the participation of *mahosi* in the proceedings of a municipal council; and thirdly prescribe the role for *mahosi* in the affairs of a municipality. This denudes a process of non-consultation and top-down approach to local government matters. Ironically, when participating in a council *mahosi* are governed by the provisions of a Code of Conduct applicable to councillors, even though they are not elected officials as it is the case with councillors. This further proves the level of ambiguity with which the national and/or provincial governments continues to look at the role and functions of *mahosi*.

Furthermore, this again boils down to the fact that *mahosi* have not been fully integrated into the system of local government since the democratisation of South Africa as they may not vote and can only speak if invited to do so by the speaker of council (Thornhill and Cloete' 2014: 59). In support of this, Netshanzhe (Interviewed 4 September 2019) explains that since the dawn of democracy, *mahosi* only occupy observer status in council proceedings in order to keep them on a non-partisan platform to avoid them being influenced by the governing party of the day. While it may be true that *mahosi* are not councillors just as councillors are not *mahosi* the government chooses within the ideological domain that the role of *mahosi* is to preserve cultural identity, traditions and customs (Mufamadi, 2000: 12). This would mean that the dawn of democracy has not managed to transform the status of *mahosi* and this will continue to create a challenge of co-existence and cooperation between *mahosi* and elected public representatives. It is in this context that the government continues to view *mahosi*. The current researcher would like to posit that this could be so ideally, however it is an open secret that generally *mahosi* have always supported the hand that feeds them since the days of apartheid and they continue to do so in the post-1994 era. Therefore the impact of government on the cultural conception of royalty and governance continues to be carried as a heavy baggage even in the post-democratic South African era.

Flowing from above it is no wonder that the relationship between *mahosi* and a formal municipality does not appear to have been finalised in terms of government policy even though the Department of Traditional Affairs has been assigned the responsibility to bring this policy lacuna to finality (Thron and Cloete, 2014: 59). To drive this point home, according to Matloga (interviewed on 11 September 2019), in provinces *vhuhosi* affairs are currently located under the Chief Directorate of the Department of Cooperative Governance, Human Settlements and Traditional Affairs (CoGHSTA). Elsewhere the provincial entity takes orders from the national Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (COGTA), which has two deputy ministers, one for cooperative governance and the other for traditional affairs. However, history has shown that cooperation itself is still a pipedream since *mahosi* seem to matter when the time to campaign for elections is upon us. The attempt to present the people with the stark choice between *mahosi* and municipal governance is inappropriate and perpetuates a policy challenge (Mufamadi, 2000: 12).

This is further indicative of the fact that national policy on *vhuhosi* and institutions lacks synergy since each province seems to have its own legislation rather than operating within the ambit and blueprint of national legislation; which legislation is ironically derived from the apartheid era Black Administration Act (See for example Limpopo Traditional Leadership and Institutions Act 6 of 2005). In the Eastern Cape Province there exists the position of principal traditional leader, which is not the case in Limpopo, meaning that the dent on the hierarchical structure of *vhuhosi* of Vhavenda, in particular, has not been nationally addressed (Ntsandeni, interviewed on 22 July 2019; Limpopo Traditional Leadership and Institutions Act 6 of 2005). If by any chance the position of 'principal traditional leadership' had been enacted in the Limpopo Province, its equivalent position would rightly be that of *khosikhulu* according to Vhavenda hierarchical structure (See chapter 2). However, the same is absent in the Limpopo Provincial legislation on *vhuhosi* and institutions.

This further vindicates the current researcher's stance in adducing that the current government has not been able to adequately address the plight of *mahosi* who had hoped to return *vhuhosi* and institutions to its former glory by reintroducing the original hierarchical positions that were grounded on African/ Vhavenda values which informed the existence of such hierarchical rungs of administration. It further fuels the debate

about national government not being certain about how to fully harmonise the integration of *vhuhosi* within its governance structures while simultaneously returning to the original and traditional administrative arrangement which to a degree characterised the dignity and credibility of *vhuhosi* and institutions. This situation further complicates the confusion on the original status, role and functions of *vhuhosi* and institutions such that the crux of the matter is that the challenge of returning *vhuhosi* and institutions to its traditional form remains and will be continue to do so for future generations.

6.6 Conclusion

This chapter concentrated on the impact of the homeland policy on Vhavenda cultural conception of royalty and governance. In order to discuss this the current researcher looked at royalty and governance as it is understood from an Afrocentric point of view so as to be able to identify the impact that descended upon *vhuhosi* and institutions throughout the period of colonialism, apartheid and into South Africa's post-1994 period. It was prudent for the current researcher to briefly invoke African traditionalism and culture which are determined by African values of *Ubuntu* and communalism. Departing from this premise it stood to reason that the original nature of traditionalism and culture as essentially juxtaposed elements, had been compromised under the oppressive homeland system.

Equally the current researcher deemed it fit to travel the political journey within Vhavenda homeland by identifying influential scenarios that determined the political space and activism under the rapidly changing situation in South Africa with the rise of BC and the Soweto uprising of June 16 1976. The essence of employing these events was in order to demonstrate that they influenced political activism within the 'RoV', during which period various sources agreed that this had a profound effect on political change among Vhavenda. Alongside these changes the study argues that the June 16 episode found a potential climate for robust activism of which the seed thereof was planted during the period leading to opposition to the Venda homeland's 'independence'; which started around 1976/ 77. In addition the emergence of the UDF into the 'RoV's political scene found the ground fertile for political activism since much

of political activity initially happened clandestinely by various school leavers, the clergy and people from different hues; for fear of victimisation by the intelligence and security machinery within the homeland. The coming of the UDF into the political space emboldened Vhavenḁa not to jump the proverbial ship since the ANC-aligned organisation also found the University of Venda (Univen) and various colleges of education in the homeland ripe for militant political action. Therefore, and in the same fashion, the clergy from various religious denominations were not prepared to be left behind since they opposed the homeland system right from its inception such that the introduction of the tri-cameral system found the situation ripe for political radicalism.

This became evident when the homeland leaders and their senior officials were occasionally accused of ritual murder, the products from which they foolishly believed would empower them politically and professionally. However, this heinous acts resulted in witch-hunting and witch-burning from '*makhomureidi*' and led to the gradual loss of the 'RoV' grip on the government machinery by *mahosi* and their cohorts. Much as *mahosi* had assumed a negative image due to their being compromised by the homeland system, the oppression and suppression of their own subjects and the spate of unsolved ritual murder cases, raised the 'RoV' to boiling point. This situation had reached a point of no return and thus necessitated the disbandment of the apartheid apparatus and the reincorporation of all *ethnic* creations into the broader South Africa.

The release of political prisoners and unbanning of political organisations like the ANC, SACP and PAC as well as the emergence of CONTRALESA provided a much needed impetus for those *mahosi* who were either sitting on the fence or had been, either overtly or covertly, anti-homeland system and had been clandestinely politically active to come out of the closet. Equally even those who had been collaborating with the apartheid system found a new home when they realised that the die was cast, and thus jumped ship in order to be politically relevant. The result was that even the liberation movement realised that it would be politically naïve to sideline *vhuhosi* and institutions given their proximity to the rural people; who represented the majority of potential votes for the government in waiting. This developments sparked a debate on how to deal with *vhuhosi* and institution in the emerging era and how to integrate it into the democratic system in future. Be that as it may *vhuhosi* still remains not fully integrated into the governance except at local level and they do not appear to be

treated as important equal partners either by the municipalities, let alone the provincial and national governments. In the same vein the legislation which is relevant to *vhuhosi* and institutions (of Vhaventxa) in the Limpopo Province is not in harmony with those in other provinces. That being said the damage that has been inflicted by the homeland system will be with us for years to come and this calls on the government to take steps to begin at the local level to harmonise land administration policy which always pits municipalities and *mahosi* at loggerheads. In essence although the government might claim to have brought back the dignity and integrity of *vhuhosi* and institutions, in the case of Vhaventxa for example, the hierarchical structure of administration has not been fully re-established or revived.

Chapter 7

General Conclusion(s)

7.1 Summary of the findings

This study explored *vhuhosi* and institutions of Vhavenḁa during the period of South Africa's homeland policy. However, it was logically important to depart by focusing on *vhuhosi* and institutions of Vhavenḁa during the pre-colonial era in order to set the tone of the study by locating the history of black South Africans in the Soutpansberg (Spelonken) District of the former South African Republic (SAR), later known as the Transvaal Province. This is because at the close of the 19th century the colonial government, with the assistance of the missionaries, had already consolidated its foreign presence, influence and dominance administratively in the Soutpansberg area. Therefore, the study's main period of focus was between the years 1898 and 1994. In order to achieve the aim of the study the current researcher identified relevant poignant pointers as objectives and explored them from an Afrocentric perspective such that it was necessary to invoke the essence of African/ Vhavenḁa value systems. Therefore the findings and conclusion of the study are premised on each of these objectives that have been organised as sub-headings in order to assist in giving a summary of the findings of the study as it is done below.

7.1.1 The Nature of the Relationship between the South African Government and *vhuhosi* of Vhavenḁa on the Eve of Apartheid

It is prudent to remain sober to the fact that the exploration of the current researcher on *vhuhosi* of Vhavenḁa and institutions is grounded on an Afrocentric perspective. This is mainly because African traditional authority in general is encapsulated within *vhuhosi* status and indigenous institutions; as attained through conquest and later succession, which African/ Vhavenḁa values had cascaded from generations to generations from time immemorial. Although generally succession to the throne was premised on conflict, in some cases it promoted human relations which were strengthened by co-operation among Africans and diplomatic practices of treaties; thus dispelling the notion of *vhuhosi* and institutions as being undemocratic and backward. While still at this point this study established the significant responsibilities

of *vhuhosi* and institutions which are political, economic, social, legal and religious, since the *khosi* is/ was viewed as the father and mother of the community. This flows against claims by foreign powers of likening *vhuhosi* with administrative injustice because of their pseudo-narrative of white supremacy in all aspects of life.

In opposition to Eurocentric perspectives this study thus arrived at the conclusion that regardless of this pseudo-narrative of white supremacy, *vhuhosi* and its institutions is/ was not absolute in nature, especially given its element of communalism and *Ubuntu/ Vhuthu/ Vunhu*. *Vhuhosi* entail (ed) contact and being in touch with the people, being one of them and accommodating their will in decision-making and pursuing their goals and welfare. This does not imply that the system itself was without imperfections as it is the case with other systems that have organize societies socio-politically throughout the centuries. Having said that the pertinent question of authority *vis-à-vis* legitimacy came to the fore wherein the current researcher argued that within *vhuhosi*, legitimacy was the primary arbiter of authority such that one element would exist in vacuum in the absence of the other; hence the two are juxtaposed and thus grounded in African/ Vhavenda value systems that inform traditional legitimacy. Departing from this, it is the well-considered view of the current researcher that the perceived emphasis on individualism in systems is partially anti-communalism and the interdependence that are premised on African/ Vhavenda value systems of *vhuhosi*.

It flows from above that African/ Vhavenda values enabled *vhuhosi* and institutions to operate within the confines of democratic elements that were unfortunately later undermined and demeaned by foreign powers. This is because foreign powers did not bother to investigate traditionalism and African/ Vhavenda values in depth. This was the principal reason why they committed gross transversal errors regarding Africans/ Vhavenda inasmuch as they failed to look at the institution through indigenous African/ Vhavenda standards and tools. Driven by the desire to 'civilise' and impose their foreign policies and control *vhuhosi* and institutions, foreign powers ventured into changing the hierarchical structure and nomenclature thereof: using words such as 'chief' and 'paramount chief', which the current researcher avoided using as they were found to be problematic as admitted by some authors (Kirkaldy and Dederen). It was for this reason that the current researcher opted to use the original Vhavenda concepts of *thovhele*, *khosikhulu*, *khosi* and *vhuhosi*, instead and where applicable. Thus the

introduction of colonial concepts were in line with the objectives of gradual destruction of *vhuhosi*, institutions and its systems. It is for this reason that in this study the concept Vhavenda is logically preferred to the colonial “the Vhavenda”, “the Venda” or “Vendaland” as it was found in some sources.

However, by enacting various legislation, such as the Native Land Act of 1913, the white authorities were able to remove Africans, and Vhavenda in particular, from their original places of abode forcibly, dispossess them of and take control of land administration, usually through the assistance of collaborative *mahosi* who were made to replace their siblings and/ or half-siblings, assume political dominance and thus launch an assault on African/ Vhavenda values. The end-product was the establishment of ‘native reserves’ that morphed into homelands and later, ‘independent’ homeland in the case of Venda. In this regard the colonial and apartheid administrations used individual *mahosi* who could demonstrate genealogical links to royal families and studies from government ethnologists, anthropologists and historians to put them within the created administrative hierarchy. The enticement to monetary power and materialism by these collaborators failed to ameliorate conflict relations, and thus eroded the humanist essence of African/ Vhavenda culture which is based on *Ubuntu/ Vhuthu/ Vunhu* and ‘familyhood’.

Through the partnership with these collaborative and created *mahosi* foreign powers were able to break the power, authority and legitimacy of *mahosi* and set the tone of their hegemonic as well as paternalistic relationship for years to come, by corrupting African/ Vhavenda value systems; while diluting and infusing these values into European systems which manifested through racial domination, hatred, violent conflicts and competitiveness. In this instance these foreign administrations had prepared ground for the replacement of the authority of *vhuhosi* and institutions that were ascribed through lineage and patriarchal principles by introducing the system of elections, an alien context which does/ did not find resonance within the African/ Vhavenda value systems. These developments should be understood within the context that *vhuhosi* and institutions represent (ed) the custodianship of African/ Vhavenda culture and the political heritage of Africans, and Vhavenda in particular in this study. That being said while most *mahosi* were collaborators of the white minority

some continued to be sympathetic to the cause of opposition to discrimination and domination later led by the ANC and the entire liberation movement.

Reminiscent to this is the opposition to white domination and control by leaders such as King Makhado and the ultimate defeat of his son Alilali Mphephu during the Mphephu-Boer War. As a result Alilali Mphephu was conquered, subjugated and thus lost both economic and political power as well as control of his land. Both father and son leaders had respectively resisted any encroachment into Venda by the white authorities and paid a heavy price in the end. By this time the whites had already been able to interfere in succession matters, a practice which became a recurring historical feature of traditional political governance affairs. In this regard the role of *makhadzi* and *ndumi* had also been relegated to the back-bench. In addition the role and responsibilities of the Great Council of advising *mahosi* had been taken over by the whites who dictated all the terms. Complicit in these were missionaries who pretended to be saviours and go-between of Vhavenda and whites whereas they were party to this victimhood that visited *vuhosi* and institutions. This in effect affected the genealogical thread that used to hold these dynasties solidly together for generations.

For this reason, and resultantly, by the close of the 19th (nineteenth) century Venda had three prominent *mahosi* who were labelled as 'independent' by the white authorities: Ramabulana/ Mphephu, Tshivhase and Mphaphuli. By this time Vhavenda kingdom under the legendary Thohoyandou had been disintegrated. Thus the kingdom had reached a point where white infiltration had become a recurring historical feature of political governance in *vuhosi* affairs. This also interfered in the genealogical relation of Vhavenda royalty and their hierarchical existence given that Tshivhase, for example, hailed from a junior lineage of Thohoyandou as compared to that of Ramabulana/ Mphephu, which is/ was senior from historical evidence. However, through the political machinations of the white authorities, Tshivhase was instead made to be equal in status to Ramabulana/ Mphephu through their policy arrangement. These developments were clearly against the succession laws and values that were respected by Vhavenda throughout the generations. Thereafter came an evolution of various *mahosi* such as Nelwamondo and Madzivhandila, among others.

7.1.2 The Development of Ethnic Identity within South Africa's Homeland

System: The Case of Vhavenḁa Ethnic Identity

The current researcher has incessantly argued that the 'tribalisation' and *ethnicisation* project was part of the bigger project of the colonial and apartheid governments, which bordered on their obsession to take away from and gain control of the land politically and economically. In order to succeed in this regard the colonial and apartheid governments exploited and manipulated the rivalries that were frequent among brothers and/ or half-brothers, like they did with the Ramabulana dynasty. This assisted in weakening the once powerful resistance against colonialism by Vhavenḁa. In this regard some rulers like Ramabulana and Davhana would enlist the help of the foreign powers against their own. Thus their quest for dominance of their own brothers in turn also weakened the individuals. It is a historical fact that Makhado, and his son Aḁilali Mphephu after him, vehemently resisted the encroachment of the white authorities into the Venḁa territory. In this regard South Africa's history calendar is littered with such incidents of violent and bloody resistance to land dispossession and control. This is proof that black South Africans were not necessarily easy targets to these invasions but found themselves against sophisticated and superior weaponry.

This study also looked at the concepts *identity*, *ethnic identity* and *ethnicisation* in order to lead to how it was enforced and applied among Vhavenḁa, in particular, as part of the colonial and apartheid project of 'tribalisation'. Of essence is that the current researcher attempted to show the artificiality of *ethnicisation* and 'tribalisation' inasmuch as the objective thereof went against the absence of homogeneity among Vhavenḁa as a people. The current researcher also argues against the claimed perennial nature of *ethnicity* as it related to Vhavenḁa, in particular, by showing that ethnicity was a construction that happened under circumstances and experiences that prevailed at a point in time. In this regard the current researcher denudes the multi-cultural nature of Vhavenḁa and also argues about the different points of origin from all over the sub-continent, if not the continent, negated against the existence of homogeneity among them. Thus identity cannot be constructed on its own without being located within cultural, social and political connotations. Regardless of this, this study also admitted to the existence of the quest for belonging which results in the attitudes of "*othering*", the "self" and "them", which suited well into the 'divide and rule' project. Along this are/ were what are referred to as markers: culture, politics,

language, common history and ancestry. Thus identity is a subject that must not be taken for granted by those who would like to exploit and manipulate it or even abuse and misuse it; without denying the existence of distinctiveness among people though.

The history of the demise of both Makhado and Alilali Mphephu, cannot be exclusive of the emergence of various other *mahosi* as influenced by the machinations of the powers that be. Various other *mahosi* were created and/ or promoted as a way of permanently weakening the powerful resistance of the Ramabulana dynasty against the encroachment of foreign powers. Thus people who used to regard themselves as family or clan found themselves designated in the practice of “*othering*” although they shared the same ancestry: Ramabulana, Tshivhase and Rammbuḁa. The birth of such “*otherings*” gave birth to rigidities and immobilisations and *ethnic* identifications which satisfied immediate imperialistic/ colonial European interests. This is because they were nevertheless seen by the whites as fully ‘traditional’ and thus were given legitimacy. This much was also admitted to a certain extent by Van Warmelo during the exploration of this study.

The above developments assisted in the project of regionalisation of Venḁa under such *mahosi*, a process which started as far back as the disappearance of Ṭhohoyandou. This undermined the fact that previous polities were not really about ‘tribes’ but were organised around the family, clan or dynastic history. As history would have it the powers that be assumed the responsibilities of installing *mahosi*, just like they did for the first time in Venḁa when they installed George Mbulaheni Ramabulana Mphephu, the father of Patrick Ramaano Mbulaheni Ramabulana Mphephu, who later became the ‘Chief Minister’ and ‘President for life’ of the “RoV”. Thus the overall project developed years later as part of the inception of the homeland policy of separate development. This trend could also be observed in other parts of Africa where the colonial/ apartheid authorities had interest in the composition and practice of *vuhosi* for the purpose of serving their own selfish and narrow interests at the expense of the subjects of the indigenous political institutions. Hence Mphephu, Sinthumule and Kutama, for example found themselves on different sides of the fence as the powers that be had envisaged. This being part of the bigger ‘tribalisation’ project. Of essence is that as all this was happening, it resonated with the hegemonic paternalism, non-consultation and imposition; these which were typical of white authorities. As

alien as these practices were to Africans/ Vhaventxa, they were later embodied by *mahosi* who were corrupted by the white authorities, directly or through association.

7.1.3 The Changing Power Relations between the South African Government and *Mahosi* within the Vevxa Homeland

It is a historical fact that pre-colonial African polities existed without national political borders because the states and kingdoms, empires and societies never had defined borders, but cultural frontiers between linguistic groupings: these which defined them. But this did not hamper interactive means of communication and association between cultural groups. This also encouraged intellectual inter- and intra-cultural relations, human dynamism and economic development, which encouraged inter- as well as intra-African trade and cemented power relations. Equally African polities were grounded on values which included discipline, focus, honesty, integrity, transparency, hard work and love for Africa and its people. However all these suffered a knock with the coming of foreign powers because within African polities were *vhuhosi* and institutions which throughout the history of South Africa, for example, were deliberately less understood and viewed through a myopic and European hegemonic lens as being innately cultural, politically and economically inadequate and deficient.

As a result the 'moral' obligation of the apartheid authorities was to implement their policy within the realm of their ideological objectives of hegemonic paternalism, discrimination and dominance of "divide and rule", without bothering to understand the traditional essence of African/ Vhaventxa values. Therefore to just implant the European social order without taking into consideration the histories, experiences and dynamism of Africans/ Vhaventxa was an insult of the worst kind and bordered on 'ignorance and cowardice'. It was not surprising that within the realm of colonialism and apartheid the white authorities imposed whatever elements they could come up with, including the imposition of European cultures and languages and even restructured administrative models without even according Africans/ Vhaventxa any consultation and respect. This defined the relationships right from the beginning. By so doing foreign powers diluted the essence of the status, image, power and authority of *vhuhosi* and institutions such that the relationships took off within the vagaries of racial and *ethnic* development. This seems to have represented a domino effect throughout the fabric of *vhuhosi* and institutions. For example the communal link

between *mahosi* and their communities was never considered and was thus greatly affected such that, for example, the forced removals project had deeper negative connotations to the existence of African/ Vhavanḁa and affected their cultural values, belief systems and their communal relationship.

The after-effect of the assimilation and dominance of African/ Vhavanḁa culture implied that they had to abandon their culture and adopt foreign ones. Therefore much as foreign contact diluted, devalued and denigrated African/ Vhavanḁa culture to the benefit of the Europeans destroyed African/ Vhavanḁa values. Included in this was the ignorance by European powers of the 'asymmetricality' of the status of *vuhosi* to that of Europeans. Hence the Europeans tempered with the hierarchical structures of administration to avoid the equivalence that existed at all costs. This went a long way to cause irreparable damage to *vuhosi* and institutions of Vhavanḁa in particular. Accompanying this was the enactment of various legislation that tempered with land tenure and the social-political organisation. This eventually led to the establishment of 'reserves' which morphed into so-called *ethnic* 'independent states': from the South Africa Act of 1909 to the 'Republic of Venda' Constitution Act of 1979. This also empowered senior *mahosi* to follow their masters' practice of creating *vuhosi* while simultaneously demoting and/ or dismissing those *mahosi* who had become less favourable to them. Thus the changing relationship between the South African government and *mahosi* of Venḁa also had a ripple effect in that it also tempered with the relationship within *vuhosi* and institutions as ascribed by African/ Vhavanḁa values systems.

The introduction of the three-tier system of government as imposed by the apartheid government of 'tribal' and/ or community councils or authorities, the regional authorities and territorial authorities were such instruments which further changed the administrative machinery of *vuhosi* and institutions and changed the face of relationships. Accompanying such changes were the 'tribalisation' and/ or 'retribalisation' project which also did not take into consideration the history and experiences of Vhavanḁa. Thus the maxims of "*vuhosi vhu tou bebelwa*" (*vuhosi* is ascribed by birth) and "*khosi ndi khosi nga vhalanda*" (a *khosi* rules through the support of his people) were made to lose their relevance within the fabric of *vuhosi* and institutions and thus affected African/ Vhavanḁa value systems. Within this conundrum

was the reward for some *mahosi* for their obeisance and loyalty, the trappings of power and materialism, which blinded the homeland leadership to political reality. Further blinding Patrick Mphedu was the naïve belief that the long-lost status of *thovhele* would be restored to the Ramabulana dynasty by the apartheid system; which unfortunately was not to be.

The role of missionaries in this regard cannot go unnoticed because the conversion and/ or christinisation project that was adopted by them appeared to be part of the bigger picture of conquest and subjugation. Equally, just like the politicians with whom they shared their original nationality, missionaries did not care to know anything about the culture and practices of Vhavenda. According to the missionaries one had to adopt education and religious systems and be a modern person or stick to the traditional values and were regarded as 'primitive', such that the pressure was too high, too attractive and too obscure to notice the signs of socio-religious blackmail. The result was that new religious beliefs were embraced while traditional beliefs discarded without flinching. Therefore the followers of the missionaries were forced to abandon and even forbidden to associate with African/ Vhavenda traditional practices or even their close relatives who were still steeped in traditionalism. It is no wonder that Africans/ Vhavenda ended up forming their own African Independent Churches (AIC) or African Indigenous Churches (AIC), which were derived from the infusion of the traditional and cultural practices into the 'modern' western teachings as a way of extricating themselves from the fangs of paternalistic and discriminative missionary religion.

7.1.4 The Impact of Homeland Policy on the Internal Relations among *Mahosi* of Vhavenda *vis-à-vis* Internal Tensions within the Homeland

From this study it becomes evident that the colonial, and the apartheid government alike, took advantage of the naïveté of *mahosi* and their proximity to the rural communities to manipulate them into accepting the homeland policy. Within this spectrum was the politico-economic goal to make *mahosi* and communities to be economically dependent on white South Africa. In this instance the relations between *vhuhosi* and institutions of Vhavenda and the South African government on the one hand was influenced by the homeland policy while on the other the internal relations

among *mahosi* themselves was adversely affected by this scenario. This was because of the fact that although some *mahosi* were active collaborators in the homeland system, there were those who were vehemently opposed to the system either overtly or covertly, while others for fear of reprisals remain non-committal to any side of the spectrum. These developments had dire consequences on *mahosi*'s relations with their respective communities.

Similarly the naïveté of *mahosi* was also shown by Patrick Mphephu, who at the time of 'independence' on 13 September 1979, made a call to action for his foot-soldiers (*mahosi* and cabinet ministers), including those *mahosi* who had been co-opted into the assembly as MPs, to see to it that the homeland policy, and the Vhavenda homeland 'independence' in particular, became a success. All this was happening at the back of the opportunism and materialism that had beset *mahosi* as salaried servants of the government on the one hand, and the 'ethnic nationalism and patriotism' that went with it on the other. This call to action actually benefitted Patrick Mphephu the most as he used this to consolidate his political power in the homeland, and equally positioned him on the road to dictatorship and rampant corruption; which the current researcher referred to as 'political narcissism' for lack of a better word. Patrick Mphephu's powers gave him the latitude to appoint and dismiss cabinet ministers as he wished: he wanted near him men of 'good character' who looked optimistically to the future of his people; this of course being full of saccharism. This allowed Patrick Mphephu to hold sway over overall internal power relations within the homeland, *alas* to the advantage of his apartheid masters.

From this study it is evident that Patrick Mphephu controlled any powerful and strategic position in the homeland government as envisaged by his masters in Pretoria. He also had the way-with-all to decide who to elevate to and demote from *vhuhosi* and cabinet. In this way he himself as a custodian of *vhuhosi* was violating the very essence of Vhavenda values that were ascribed in the institution of *vhuhosi*. Hence the current researcher concludes that Patrick Mphephu was 'captured' by the homeland policy of *ethnic* segregation. This means that *vhuhosi* internal relations had been drastically and irreversibly altered making them to be open to abuse by those who had to accord it the dignity and respect it used to deserve and enjoy from time immemorial. Therefore, at the expense of all this Patrick Mphephu's mandate was to maintain

peace, order, progress and stability for the benefit of Pretoria at all costs. It is therefore not surprising that Patrick Mphahlele, at a later stage, opted for a one-party state in order to pull all the strings. In this regard he maintained that a one-party state was compatible with Africa's tradition of arriving at political decisions in contrast to a two-party arrangement; whereas ironically he himself and his cabinet were using tradition as a vehicle to maintain and consolidate oppression and discrimination against Vhavenda within the homeland. As it turned Patrick Mphahlele summarily dictated that every Muvenda had to be a member of his traditionalist political party, the VNP. This signalled the destruction of the traditional checks-and-balances that used to define *vhuhosi* and institutions as discussed in the previous chapters of this study. It also sounded a death knell to whatever that remained of freedom of association, choice and expression in the Venda homeland.

Caught in the middle were ordinary Vhavenda who had been carted away from the urban areas to the homeland which was still highly rural, this making them more unemployed and destitute. Within the mix Vhavenda lost their South African citizenship as a result of this ruthless social engineering. *Mahosi* they came back to no longer ascribed to the essence of Vhavenda value systems that made *vhuhosi* and institutions stand out and tick; more so because *mahosi* were swimming in a pool of corruption and materialism through which they enriched themselves within the Bantu Authorities schemes. This was an indictment of the erosion of communalism that previously went hand in hand with *Ubuntu/ Vhuthu/ Vunhu*. The destruction of communalism translated into the descent into individualism which was promoted by the fact that the political and economic scenario did not enable Venda to provide employment for its thousands of people who had been forced back into its domain; thus translating into increased poverty which was supposedly cushioned by relief programmes. Within this equation was Patrick Mphahlele's practice of creating jobs for those closer to him who descended to his royal homestead during weekends to plead for better and senior positions for themselves and their next of kin. As this happened the hopeless ones found escape through employment in white farms and white areas that were closer to the homeland, like Louis Trichardt. In this way the institution of *vhuhosi* had become bureaucratized as it was entangled in the apartheid state apparatus: a contradiction to the original *vhuhosi* internal power relationships. This was because *mahosi* were enjoying benefits outside the tribute system and occupied

seats in parliament while they further descended into an identity crisis and dualism of traditional administration and modern governance.

Flowing from above Vhavenḁa maxims of “*khosi ndi khosi nga vhalanda*”, “*vhuhosi vhu tou bebelwa*” and “*vhuhosi a vhu pfukhi mulambo*” lost resonance and relevance to Vhavenḁa value systems; when some *mahosi* were forcibly removed from their historical land and placed under others, for example Manenzhe under Tshikundamalema; or had individuals brought to their land to rule over them like in the case of Magoro under Masakona and/ or Ngwekhulu under Davhana; while others were promoted individually thus causing an internal relational problem within the royal family who had hoped that the promotion of an incumbent was there to benefit the entire family, like in the case of Makuya. This was a reflection of the challenge to ascribing to the customary law of succession, and further hampered the essence of *vhuhosi* as a symbol of unity, harmony and communalism; hence severing this institution from the lifeblood of the people. Such examples were also pronounced by the removal of legitimate successors like Ratshimphi Tshivhase and Piet Dzhombere Sinthumule and their replacement with their half-brothers, Ratshialingwa and George Mukhudwana, respectively: another dent to the internal relations that were determined by African/ Vhavenḁa cultural and customary values.

South Africa’s new democracy does not seem to have brought with it any new dawn to the institution of *vhuhosi* in general, and that of Vhavenḁa in particular, as it is evident due to the fact that the homeland system itself has done irreparable damage. In this regard, the newly found materialistic image of *vhuhosi* is also resonant when they are engaged in a tug-of-war with municipality councillors for control of the land allocation during council meetings. The ANC itself had been loathe to embrace *vhuhosi* before and soon after the unbanning of political organisations, but soon warmed up to the idea just on the eve of the first democratic elections on realising their strategic and potential influence over the rural constituencies. This has created with it a hot potato for internal relations between elected councillors and *mahosi*, which the government seems to find difficult to attend to, especially due to contestation over control and administration of rural land. In this regard it is apparent that the democratic government still views *mahosi* and institutions with the eye that regards them as mere

custodians of culture and tradition and not as part of the equation of modern and/ or post apartheid governance machinery.

7.1.5 The Impact of Homeland Policy on Vhavenda's Cultural Conception of Royalty and Governance

Madzhe's view (1996) that by the close of the 1970s the apartheid city had become a reality with the establishment of the TBVC states is clearly befitting. In the same instance these changes had also drastically transformed the socio-economic and political outlook of *vhuhosi* and institutions. It had also caused polarization between *vhuhosi* and institutions on the one side as well as mainly rural communities on the other. The end result was that this greatly impacted on the nexus between royalty and governance. This was exacerbated by overcrowding within the rural areas and the overwhelming dependency of the communities on the already reduced earnings. Hence the numerous challenges experienced by the rural communities, sowed seeds of resentment for *vhuhosi* and institutions as communalism was replaced by individualistic tendencies as a result of being socio-economically oppressed and abused. To sum it the indigents had been turned into aliens within the natural borders of their own country while equally *mahosi* had been removed from the very essence of *Ubuntu/ Vhuthu/ Vunhu* as determined by African/ Vhavenda value systems.

Meanwhile Biko had introduced his ideology of BC which later found resonance in the experiences of Vhavenda during the period of the dictatorship and oppression of the homeland government under Patrick Mphahlele. Within the 'RoV' Patrick Mphahlele believed that citizens had the obligation towards the state and not the state being the servant of the people and thus owe an obligation to the people by being their representative. This sowed seeds of resentment which found fertile ground during the period of the 16 June 1976 uprisings. The students and the youth of Vhavenda had years earlier been offered an eye-opener by the existence of the opposition VPP, although it was a bit short-lived, during the pre- and post-'independence' period. This changed the cultural conception of the youth towards royalty and governance, especially within the oppressive atmosphere which was devoid of transparency and accountability; and thus lacked the semblance of African/ Vhavenda values as ascribed by culture, customs and tradition. In addition the legitimate authority of *mahosi* over their subjects

had been replaced by illegitimate acquiescence which was further weakened by modernisation and the 'detrribalisation' project over the urban Vhavenḁa people.

Flowing from above Vhavenḁa started to look at the Venḁa homeland as a concentration camp synonymous with peaceful and silent suffering which made them to feel inferior. Thus Biko professed that this suffering needed to be challenged and done away with. However, as maladministration, nepotism and corruption continued unabated within the 'RoV', so did Vhavenḁa become more and more politically conscious; inasmuch as the homeland leaders became overconfident of their stay at the helm of the homeland government with the assistance of white dominated South African politics. This was fuelled by *mahosi's* continual general conviction that the youth and students of Venḁa were culturally rather than politically, such that it was believed that they looked at *mahosi* with awe. However this perception was gradually changing as a result of the negative image that *mahosi* within and outside government were creating for themselves. The general public's conception of tradition, culture, royalty and governance was being abused and misused, especially during the 'RoV's' 'independence' celebrations and at other such annual events, where 're-education' of the youth and students towards homeland 'patriotism' and *ethnic* nationalism always dominated such events. Nevertheless with the youth and student's proximity to their counterparts from the urban areas, this was soon to change. The historical association of the youth and adults to cultural activities was to serve as a boon to the politicisation process years later.

The outbreak of the 16 June 1976 protests found a lot of the youth and students from urban areas attending school in Venḁa and staying in the hostels. This greatly assisted with the political education of the local Vhavenḁa youth and students about the evil of apartheid *vis-à-vis* homeland politics. The BC ideology also served as a feather in the cap for the politicization project which continued to rally Vhavenḁa youth and students around the slogans "Black is beautiful" and Biko's "Black man you are on your own." Hence black South Africans became more organisationally mobilised and organised post-16 June 1976. The breaking away of black students from NUSAS to form SASO had also fuelled the politicisation and consciousness in this regard: what with the formation of SRCs in secondary schools and the emergence of the SASM on the other hand. This presented the students with a much needed vehicle to oppose the powers

that be as seen with the 1977 march to Patrick Mphephu's government offices, among other such events. Thus the existence of these political formations was certainly a melting pot of socio-political dissemination of information which stood Vhavenda students and youth in good stead for years to come. Accompanying this was the establishment of the Univen in 1982 as a centre for political organisation and activity; which happened amidst the existence of the sister colleges of education in the Venda homeland. The emergence of SAYCO and SANSCO was a further shot in the arm for student and youth politics, as they were able to organise school and food boycotts.

The formation of the UDF in 1983 also found Venda as a figurative powder-keg waiting to explode. This was encouraged by the positive attitude and involvement of religious and organisations in the homeland led by such leaders like Dr. Dean Farisani, Pastors Phosiwa and Muofhe, among others, and numerous educators. Ironically another shot in the arm to political activities the continual political repression in the homeland, nepotism, corruption and widespread acts of ritual murders. This further created tensions within the homeland as communities rose against *mahosi* who were widely suspected of being complicit in such acts. Such developments resulted in the acts of witch-hunting and witch-burning by young 'comrades' called 'comtsotsis' because of the acts of 'hooliganism', which set the homeland on its path to demise and extinction. Closer to this was the death of Patrick Mphephu in 1988 of suspected poisoning. This further resulted in the homeland becoming ungovernable and the UDF found the ground prepared for political activity and the consolidation of its existence within the homeland. This being the case the UDF was able to influence the scene as an umbrella body that included the general public, the clergy, the students and the youth, who in turn instigated for the immediate end of the homeland and its reincorporation into the broader South Africa. The presence of the UDF and other political organisations emboldened Vhavenda to forget about traditionalism and culture and ahead with the fight for their place in the sun within the broader South African politics.

With the unbanning of political organisations and the release of political prisoners the die was cast for the homeland leaders and *mahosi*. This signalled the death knell for the homeland system, and Vhavenda homeland in particular, and the end of the rule, or misrule, by *mahosi* within the Venda homeland. By this time some of *mahosi* had affiliated to CONTRALESA which became a *vuhosi* organ of the ANC. This however

this brought to the fore to the ANC government-in-waiting a predicament of the incorporation of *mahosi* into the mainstream South Africa's political spectrum, especially with their tarnished history within the homeland system. To date *mahosi's* responsibility within local governance remains ambiguous: what with them suspecting elected councillors of wanting to assume their responsibilities in rural areas. Exacerbating the situation is/ was the fact that *mahosi* are regarded as ex-officio members of municipality councils, with no voting powers for fear that they may descend into political affinity. Ironically the majority of *mahosi* are affiliates of CONTRALESA, an ANC subsidiary, which makes a mockery of the excuse by government of political affiliation. The establishment by government of Provincial Houses of Traditional Leadership (HTLs) was supposed to bring *mahosi* closer to the democratic governing machinery. However, *mahosi* still appear to be rubberstamps of government decisions, as it ironically be the case under apartheid. Under apartheid, local government was structured in such a way that it segregated citizens socially, economically, spatially and racially as well as to ensure that only a small minority of South Africans benefited from socio-economic development. Be that as it may *vhuhosi* and institutions are a reality that cannot be shied away with by any government of the day and a challenge to any government for generations to come.

7.2 Recommendations

While it is true that *vhuhosi* and institutions of Vhavanḁa have a chequered history, it is also a fact that the government needs both (Vhavanḁa *vhuhosi* and institutions) for rural administration. The headache for the government is how to manage and maintain the power relations between *mahosi* and municipalities. The membership of *mahosi* within municipal councils remain unclear. This study recommends that the first step would be to establish a relationship of trust and equal partnership between the two entities of local administration through a more Afrocentric research on *vhuhosi* and institutions as well as progressive rather than recommendations that are skewed towards political comradeship and (re)deployment. Such an Afrocentric study could greatly assist in unearthing significance of the essence of the tenets embedded within African/ Vhavanḁa value systems that are grounded on culture, customs and tradition, and thus assist in playing a role into building and consolidating a harmonious relationship between *mahosi* and municipality councils. This could also go a long way in allowing the two entities of local government to find common ground in local

administration for the benefit and welfare of the communities and thus enrich the level and quality of service delivery.

In this regard this Afrocentric research has the potential to assist in arriving at the drafting, debating and finally the enactment of robust legislation that could engender a relationship of trust that could encourage the two opposing sides (*mahosi* and municipal council) to view each other as indispensable equal partners in the journey for both local and rural administration and development. This would also entail the re-education of *mahosi* and their rural communities on local administration while councillors could be re-educated into the benefit of having *mahosi* as full council members and custodians of rural areas. It is for this reason that the revisit of the status of *mahosi* as ex-officio members would not necessarily do any harm. Therefore a more focused Afrocentric approach in this regard is the way to go for the government since it appears that the issue of *vhuhosi* and institutions appears to have been an afterthought, especially given their history of being in bed with the apartheid machinery.

Moving away from the individualistic and attitude-prone approach by municipality officials towards *vhuhosi* and institutions is apparently difficult to contemplate. But their re-education on *vhuhosi vis-à-vis* the importance and essence of African value systems within everyday lives of both rural and urban communities, who owe their origins to their 'African-nes' would be a bold and important point of departure. The re-education about African value systems could start at local level and allowed to cascade to the upper echelons of governance. Therefore to immediately and wholly assume that *vhuhosi* and institutions had passed their sell-by date would be pre-emptive. "Given the dynamic nature of this indigenous political institution, it is important that its discourse be revisited from time to time" (Shai, 2018: 280). This could assist in identifying stop-gaps that could improve power relations between *mahosi* and elected councillors for the better, and for the benefit of local development projects. Lastly, this study could be replicated with a focus on *vhuhosi* and institutions in other cultural groups that find themselves sharing the bed of local administration with local municipalities; and beyond.

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Annexures

Annexure 1

Research Interview Guide

Appendix A: Consent Letter: English version

I, Theodore Nkadimeng Mahosi, student number 201834594, am a candidate for Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) degree in History, in the Department of Cultural and Political Studies, at the University of Limpopo, Turfloop campus, in the Limpopo Province of South Africa. I am currently conducting research on the topic: **An Afrocentric exploration of South Africa's Homeland Policy with specific reference to Vhavenḁa Traditional Leadership and Institutions, 1898-1994.** It is against this background that I would highly appreciate it if you could participate by contributing your views on the topic mentioned above. It is my strong belief that your contribution will highly enrich the standard of the academic report that must be submitted towards the fulfilment of the doctoral degree mentioned above. Your contribution will also enrich an understanding of South Africa's homeland policy, particularly in relation to traditional leadership and institutions in the former Venda homeland. I promise to keep your biography (ies) confidential unless elected otherwise by you. In view of this, I also hope that you understand that your contribution(s) is/are not only voluntary and consensual, but will not be passed on to the third party or parties. Note, however, that your contribution is not meant to accrue any financial benefit whatsoever, either by me as the researcher, or you as the participant as the study is strictly for academic purposes. Should you be willing to participate in this study, please complete the attached interview guide as elaborately and as honestly as possible. For further information, please, do not hesitate to contact the supervisors: Dr. K.B Shai on 078 573 6357/015 268 3231 or at email: Kgothatso.Shai@ul.ac.za; Dr A.V. Dhliwayo on 066 356 7805/063 517 4660.

Thanking you in anticipation and with utmost respect

Yours sincerely

Theodore Nkadimeng Mahosi

Cell: 079 520 6329/076 125 8227 or at nkadimeng.mahosi@gmail.com

Appendix B: Research interview guide: English version

1. Personal particulars of the participant

- 1.1. Full names (optional):
- 1.2. Age:
- 1.3. Nationality:
- 1.4. Institutional affiliation (if any):
- 1.5. Employment (if any):
- 1.6. Signature of participant:
- 1.7. Date:

2. Interview details

2.1 Date of interview:

2.2 Location:

3. Semi-structured questions for interviewees

- 3.1. What is your conception of the nature of the relationship between apartheid South Africa's homeland policy and *vuhosi* (traditional leadership) of Vhavenda?
- 3.2. What central role did the land question *vis-à-vis* South Africa's policy of land dispossession and forced removals play in promoting the homeland policy, particularly in Venda?
- 3.3. In which way do you think the homeland policy influenced the development of ethnic identity politics among the majority Black South Africans, and Vhavenda in particular?
- 3.4. How do you think the ideology of an Afrikaner super-race, minority rights and privileges influenced the role of the church regarding race relations? In which way, if any, was the church complicit in promoting ethnic identity during apartheid?
- 3.5. What is your understanding of the nature of Vhavenda traditional leadership (*vuhosi*) and institutions regarding royalty, governance and administration?
- 3.6. How did South Africa's homeland policy impact on the internal relationship among *mahosi* of Vhavenda?

- 3.7. What was the cultural impact of the homeland policy on Vhavenda conception of royalty, communalism and governance?
- 3.8. How did South Africa's homeland policy impact on Vhavenda's allegiance to and their socio-economic dependence on *vhuhosi* (traditional leadership) institution?
- 3.9. What was the nature of the power relationship between *mahosi* (traditional leaders) and the South African government before the enactment of the homeland policy?
- 3.10. How did the homeland policy influence the changing power relationship between *mahosi* of Vhavenda and the South African government?
- 3.11. In which way did the death of the then Venda homeland, the late President Patrick Mbulaheni Ramabulana Mphephu on 18 April 1988, impact on the internal political climate in the homeland?
- 3.12. What was the impact of ritual murders, witch-hunting and witch-burning that were prevalent in the aftermath of Mphephu's death have a bearing on student and youth political activism in the homeland?
- 3.13. What was the role played by the emergence of the Mass Democratic Movement (MDM) during Vhavenda's challenge to the legitimacy of the homeland system, and *vhuhosi* in particular?
- 3.14. How did the release of Walter Sisulu, Raymond Mhlaba, Ahmed Kathrada, Andrew Mlangeni and other political prisoners in 1989 and Nelson Mandela in 1990, influence the demise of in the homeland policy?
- 3.15. In which way did the events between 1989 and 1994 impact on the legitimacy of the Venda homeland government on the one hand and *vhuhosi* and institutions on the other?

Tshivenda Version

Gaidi ya thodisiso ya mbudzisavhathu kana inthaviwu

Tshinambatedzwa /aphendikisi A:

Luñwalo lwa thendelo:

Nṅe, Theodore Nkadimeng Mahosi, wa nomboro ya mutshudeni ya 201834594, ndi mutshudeni wa digirii ya vhudokotela ha Filosofi ine ya wanala kha Muhasho Ngudo dza Mvelele na dza zwa Polotiki kha Yunivesithi ya Limpopo, Khamphasini ya Turfloop kha Vundu la Limpopo, Afrika Tshipembe. Zwa zwino ndi khou ita thodisiso nga ha

thoho: **“An Afrocentric exploration of South Africa’s Homeland Policy with specific references to Vhavenda Traditional Leadership and Institutions, 1898-1994.”** Ndi nga siangane yeneyi hune nda nga zwi takalela arali vha tshi nga kona u dzhenela nga u thusedza nga mihumbulo yavho maelana na thoho yo sumbedzwaho/ talutshedzwaho afho nthā. Ndi nga u tenda hanga ho khwaṭhaho uri thuso yavho i ḑo pfumisa tshiimo tsha ripoto ya akhademi ine ya tea u netshedzwa u swikelelela thodea dza digirii ya vhudokotela yo talutshedzwaho afho nthā.

Thuso yavho i ḑo pfumisa vhupfesesesi ha pholisi ya mashangohaya ya Afrika Tshipembe nga maanda zwi tshi elana na vhangaphanda ha zwiimiswa zwa sialala kha shang”ohaya la kale la Venda. Ndi fhulufhedzisa u faranganeavhutshilo yavho lwa tshiphiri nga nḑa ha musi zwo tendelwa nga vhone. Hu tshi dzhielwa izwi nthā, vha a humbelwa uri vha tea u pfesesa uri thuso yavho a i tou vha i na vhuḑinetshedzi na u ḑiimisela fhedzi, hone a i ga ḑo fhiriselwa kha muḑwe kana vhaḑwe vhatu. Kha vha dzhiele nthā hezwi, thusedzo yavho a i khou dzhielwa u vhuelwa nga masheleni. Mbuela hu nga vha nga nḑe sa muḑodisisi kana vhone sa mudzheneli sa musi ngudo iyi yo sendamelesa kha zwa akademi. Arali vha tshi toḑa u dzhenela kha ngudo iyi, vha humbelwa u fhindula gaidi ya mbudzisavhathu/inthaviwu sa zwo sumbedzwaho nga nḑila i fhulufhedzeaho.

Kha vhuḑwe vhuṭanzi, vha a humbelwa uri vha so ngo kanakana u kwama vhafhaṭusi vha nga vhane vha vha Dokotela K. B. Shai kha nomboro dza 0785736357/ 015 268 3231 kana Email: Kgothatso.Shai@ul.ac.za; kana Dokotela A.V. Dhliwayo kha nomboro dza 0663567805/ 0635174660.

Vhalivhuwiwa nga ndavhelelo na thonifho yoṭhe.

Wavho na fhulufhedzeaho

Theodore Nkadimeng Mahosi.

Nomboro dza sele: 0795206329/ 0761258227 kana nkadimeng.mahosi@gmail.com

Gaidi ya inthaviwu ya t̄hoḏisiso

Tshinambatedzwa/aphendikisi B

1. Zwiteḅwa zwa muḅe zwa mudzheneli

- 1.1 Madzina nga vhuḏalo:
- 1.2 Miḅwaha yavho:
- 1.3 Lushaka:
- 1.4 Vhuḏumani na tshiimiswa (arali tshi hone):
- 1.5 Mushumo (arali vha tshi shuma):
- 1.6 Tsaino:
- 1.7 Datumu:

2. Zwiteḅwa nga vhuḏalo zwa inthaviwu

- 2.1 Ḑuvha ḅa inthaviwu:
- 2.2 Fhethu:

3. Mbudziso zwadzo dza vhavhudziswa.

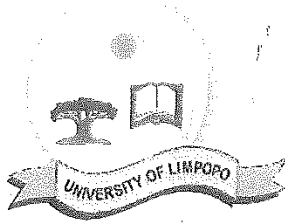
- 3.1 Vha na mbonelo-de nga ha vhuvha ha vhushaka vhukati ha phol̄isi ya mashangohaya a Afrika Tshipembe ḅa Tshiḅalula na vuhosi kana vhurangaphanda ha sialala ha Vhavenda?
- 3.2 Ndi tshipida-de tsha vhukati kana ndeme ya mbudziso nga ha shango zwi tshi vhambezwa na phol̄isi ya u dzhia shango na u pfuluswa nga khani tsha tamba kha u tuḅwedza phol̄isi ya mashangohaya, nga maanda kha ḅa Venda?
- 3.3 Vha vhona u nga phol̄isi ya mashangohaya yo tuḅwedza hani kubveledzelwe kwa polotiki ya khethano nga murafho kha vhunzhi ha vhathu vharema nahone nga maanda Vhavenda?
- 3.4 Vha humbula hani uri kuhumbulele kwa Mavhuru kwa u vha lushaka lwa nḅhesa, pfanelo t̄hukhu, na ndungelo ya uri zwo tuḅwedza hani tshipida tsho tambiwaho nga kereke zwi tshi elana na vhushaka vhukati ha vhathu? Hone arali zwi hone, kereke yo dzhenelela hani kha u tendelana na u vhona vhathu nga muvhala tshifhinganani tsha muvhuso wa tshiḅalula.
- 3.5 Vha pfesesa hani vhuvha ha vhurangaphanda ha sialala na zwiimiswa zwi tshi elana na kuvhusele na kulangulele?

- 3.6 Pholisi ya vhuvhusi ha mashangohaya yo vha na mthuthuwedzo-de kha vhushaka ha ngomu kha mahosi a Vhavenda?
- 3.7 Pholisi ya mvelele ya vhuvhusi ha mashangohaya, yo vha na thuthuwedzo-de kha kuvhonselwe kwa vuhosi, vhulanda na vhuvhusi?
- 3.8 Pholisi ya mashangohaya Afrika Tshipembe yo vha hani na mutsiko kha vhuvha ha Vhavenda khathihi na zwa matshilisano na ikonomi kha zwimiswa zwa vuhosi?
- 3.9 Tshiimo tsha vhushaka vhukati ha vhavhusi vha sialala na muvhuso wa Afrika Tshipembe phanda ha musi hu saathu u itwa zwa u tevhela pholisi ya zwa mashangohaya tsho vha tshi hani?
- 3.10 Pholisi ya zwa mashangohaya yo tuthwedza hani u shanduka ha maanda a vhushaka vhukati ha mahosi a Venda na muvhuso wa Afrika Tshipembe.?
- 3.11 Lufu lwa phuresidennde wa shangohaya la Venda, mutahabvu Vho-Patrick Mbulaheni Ramabulana nga la 18 Lambamai 1988 lwo vha hani na mutsiki kha nzulele ya polotiki ya ngomu Venda?
- 3.12 Mutsiko wa u via, u tovholo vhaloi na u fhisa vhaloi zwe zwa vha hone nga murahu ha lufu lwa Vho-Mphephu, wo vha hani na thuthuwedzo ya politiki kha matshudeni na vhaswa shangoni haya ili?
- 3.13 Tshipida tsho tambiwaho nga u bvelela ha Mass Democratic Movement (MDM) tsho vha tshifhio katini ha thaidzo dza u tangedza vhuimo-ngoho ha vuhosi ha Vhavenda, nga maanda kha tshiimo tsha sisiteme ya zwa mashangohaya?
- 3.14 U bviswa ha Vho-Walter Sisulu, Raymond Mhlaba, Ahmed Kathrada, Andrew Mlangeni, na vhanwe vharangaphanda vha politiki nga nwaha wa 1989, na Vho-Nelson Mandela nga 1990, zwo tuthwedza hani tshiimo tsha pholisi ya zwa mashangohaya?
- 3.15 Zwiwo zwa 1989 na nga murahu nga 1990 zwo vha hani na mutsiki kha vuhone ha muvhuso wa shangohaya la Venda kha linwe sia, na vuhosi na zwiimiswa zwaho kha linwe sia?

Translated by: Mr S.A Tshithukhe

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Annexure 2: Ethical Clearance Certificate



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TURFLOOP RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE
ETHICS CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE

MEETING: 06 March 2019

PROJECT NUMBER: TREC/25/2019: PG

PROJECT:

Title: An Afrocentric exploration of South Africa's Homeland Policy with specific reference to Vhavenḡa Traditional Leadership and Institutions, 1898-1994.
Researcher: TN Mahosi
Supervisor: Dr KB Shai
Co-Supervisor/s: Dr AV Dhlwayo
School: Social Sciences
Degree: PhD in History

PROF P MASOKO
CHAIRPERSON: TURFLOOP RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

The Turfloop Research Ethics Committee (TREC) is registered with the National Health Research Ethics Council, Registration Number: REC-0310111-031

Note:

- i) This Ethics Clearance Certificate will be valid for one (1) year, as from the abovementioned date. Application for annual renewal (or annual review) need to be received by TREC one month before lapse of this period.
- ii) Should any departure be contemplated from the research procedure as approved, the researcher(s) must re-submit the protocol to the committee, together with the Application for Amendment form.
- iii) PLEASE QUOTE THE PROTOCOL NUMBER IN ALL ENQUIRIES.

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