

The Ndzundza Ndebele Royal Lineage:
Press Office.

PREAMBLE

THE HISTORICAL ACCOUNT AND RESTORATION OF THE MRHABULI ROYAL HOUSE WITHIN THE NDZUNDZA NDEBELE NATION

This document serves as a solemn testament to the unbroken lineage, profound sacrifice, and enduring legacy of the **Mrhabuli Royal House** (also known historically as the **House of Mokgabudi**). It chronicles a journey central to the narrative of the Ndzundza Ndebele people, a journey of kingship, treacherous usurpation, strategic exile, and, ultimately, rightful restoration.

The history of the Ndzundza, one of the great kingdoms born of King Musi, is etched in cycles of consolidation and fragmentation. From this dynamic tapestry, the figure of **King Mrhabuli (c. 1760–1795)** emerges as a pivotal ruler. His reign marked an era of internal unification and strengthened sovereignty. As the **last custodian of the sacred *iNamrhali***, he embodied the spiritual and political essence of the kingdom. His brutal murder at the hands of his nephew, **Magodongo**, was not merely a personal tragedy but an alleged cataclysmic event that shattered the rightful line of succession, apparently unleashing a prophetic curse and scattering the royal seed according to oral tradition.

In an act of profound statesmanship, King Mrhabuli foresaw the danger and orchestrated the dispersal of his family. His descendants sought refuge among allied nations, notably the Bapedi and Bakgatla, concealing their identity under the Sotho-ized name **Mokgabudi**. This was not flight, but a strategic preservation of the royal bloodline, a deliberate hibernation of kingship to ensure its survival against annihilation. For generations, the house lived in exile, its history kept alive in whispered oral traditions, its identity guarded within the hearts of its scions.

The centuries that followed were marked by colonial disruption and apartheid-era manipulation of traditional structures, which often exacerbated historical fractures. Yet, the memory of Mrhabuli and the legitimacy of his lineage never faded into obscurity. The post-apartheid democratic era, through the **Traditional Leadership and Governance Framework Act and the Commission on Traditional Leadership Disputes and Claims**, created a pivotal opportunity to address historical injustices and restore severed lineages based on historical evidence and customary law restoration of the Mrhabuli Royal House is, therefore, not a mere administrative act. It is a **moral and historical imperative** for the following reasons:

- **Rectification of Historical Wrong:** corrects a foundational injustice which is, the illegitimate usurpation of 1795, and formally ends the state of exile imposed upon the rightful heirs.
- **Restoration of Customary Order:** reaffirms the Ndzundza's own customary laws of succession, honouring the seniority of the Great House lineage of Mahlangu as represented by Mrhabuli and his direct descendants.
- **Cultural and Spiritual Reconciliation:** It reintegrates a vital strand of Ndzundza history and identity back into the national fabric, healing a long-standing genealogical rupture and restoring a key pillar of the kingdom's ancestral foundation.

- **Completion of a Prophetic Cycle:** It fulfills the strategic foresight of King Mrhabuli himself, validating his sacrifice and the generations of resilience that ensured his line endured for this moment of return.
- **Strengthening of Contemporary Kingship:** Under the visionary sovereignty of **His Majesty King Mabhoko III**, the restoration enriches the modern Ndzundza nation by fully integrating its historic royal houses, fostering unity through acknowledged historical truth.

This document places the Mrhabuli Royal House definitively within its legitimate historical context. It honours the past, clarifies the present, and secures the future of this lineage. The reinstatement of **Ikosi Mrhabuli II** as a senior traditional leader is the culmination of this long journey, a powerful symbol that the seeds preserved in exile have now borne fruit, and the House of Mrhabuli has taken its rightful place in the heart of the Ndzundza nation once more.

1. Historical Background: The Early Ndzundza Kingdom

The Ndzundza are one of the major branches of the Ndebele nation, originating from the foundational **King, Musi**, who settled in what is now the Gauteng region in the early 1600s. After **Musi**, the kingdom experienced periods of fission and consolidation. The lineage documented here descends from **Sindeni**, a son of **Mrhetjha** and brother to **Magobholi** (the father of **Bongwe**), placing it within a senior line of the broader Ndzundza royalty.

From Sindeni to Mahlangu

- **Sindeni:** A notable early figure, son of Mrhetjha.
- **Mahlangu:** The grandson of Magobholi. King Mahlangu is father of Magobholi remembered as a skilled military strategist who actively sought to expand Ndzundza territory. While his campaigns against the powerful Swazi and Pedi kingdoms to the north and south had limited success, they earned him significant respect and notoriety among his adversaries.
- **Mrhabuli (LiRhasa) – c. 1763**
Ultimately assumed the kingship as the rightful heir from the Great House line, restoring the senior royal lineage after decades of regency and lateral succession.
- **Restoration of Lineal Authority:** Mrhabuli's installation around 1763 reestablished the direct, senior Great House lineage, which had been interrupted for nearly a century.

3. The Reign of King Mrhabuli (c. 1760 – c. 1795)

The most prominent son of Mahlangu was Mrhabuli (also spelled Mxabului or Morhabuli I). His reign is considered a pivotal era of Ndzundza consolidation and strength.

- *Achievements and Legacy:*
 - *Unification and Centralization:* He unified various Ndzundza clans and groups, forging a stronger, more centralized kingdom.

- *Military Defence and Expansion:* He engaged in prolonged wars against the expanding Bapedi kingdom in the north. Although these conflicts were costly, they defined his reign as one of resilience.
- *Establishment of Trade Networks:* He fostered trade links with European colonists at the Cape and with neighbouring African kingdoms, strengthening the Ndzundza economy.
- *A Legendary Figure:* Oral history remembers him as a physically powerful, compassionate, and a just ruler, a wise and formidable leader who shaped the kingdom's identity. His reign is celebrated among the Ndzundza, and his legacy is also acknowledged in the oral histories of neighbouring groups like the Bakgatla and Bapedi.
- *The Mystical iNamrhali: King Mrhabuli was the last confirmed custodian of the sacred iNamrhali,* mystical objects or teachings central to Ndzundza kingship and spirituality. Their fate after his death remains one of the great unanswered questions in Ndzundza oral tradition.

3.1 A Treacherous End and a Strategic Dispersal

King Mrhabuli was alleged brutally murdered by Magodongo, the son of his brother Mgwezana. The assassination, motivated by envy and ruthless ambition, was an act of extreme cruelty (*uKukhobonga/ukuhlolola*

The Lineage Context:

- Mahlangu was king.
- He had several sons, including Mgwezana and Mrhabuli.

Foreseeing the imminent danger to his lineage, King Mrhabuli had previously instructed his family to seek refuge in neighbouring kingdoms upon his death. This was a deliberate act of statesmanship, not flight.

The strategic goals were:

- **To Preserve the Royal Bloodline:** In the volatile politics of pre-colonial Southern Africa, a king's death often triggered purges to eliminate rival claimants. Dispersal ensured the survival of legitimate heirs.
- **To Exploit Existing Alliances:** Refuge was sought with politically connected and culturally compatible powers, primarily the Bapedi (Marota) Kingdom in the Steelpoort region and Swazi-linked territories, relationships often reinforced by kinship and marriage alliances.
- **To Ensure Future Restoration:** This move was a calculated bid for long-term continuity, protecting the seeds of the kingdom's future identity and legitimacy.

4. The Sons of Mrhabuli and the Legacy of Exile

The change follows predictable phonetic rules between Nguni and Sotho-Tswana language groups:

- "Mrh" to "Mokg" / "Mkg": The complex Ndebele consonant cluster "Mrh" (a breathy, voiced sound) does not exist in Sotho languages. The closest and most natural equivalent is "Mkg" or "Mokg" (as in "Mokgatla" for Bakgatla).
- "-abuli" to "-abudi": The shift from "i" to "i" is minimal, but the spelling often adapts to Sotho orthography.
- Meaning Retention: The core name is preserved in sound and identity, but its form is adapted to blend into a new linguistic environment.

This is not a random change; it is a direct transliteration rewriting a name from one language's sound system into another's. Using the distinctly Ndebele name "Mrhabuli" would have been a death warrant. "Mokgabudi" allowed them to maintain the essence of their royal identity while appearing as members of the communities offering them sanctuary. *"Mokgabudi" is the Sotho-ized name adopted by the descendants of King Mrhabuli to conceal their royal Ndzundza lineage during a period of persecution.*

6. The Line of Descent from Khunwana and Modern Restoration

- Khunwana /Mokhulwana) 1795 son of Mrhabuli /Mokgabudi(also known as MaVula) was a son of King Mrhabuli, a significant figure in Southern African history, particularly among the Ndebele/Matabele people, with Khunwana being a prominent prince who later led or was associated with a significant lineage or group, possibly a branch of the Mrhabuli clan following Mrhabuli's era. Key Points: Family Lineage: King Mrhabuli, a brother to King Mgwezana, had a son named Prince Khunwana (MaVula) liDuba, indicating a direct link in royal succession. Historical Role: Khunwana's name appears in accounts of the Ndebele (Matabele) people, linking him to important figures and events after Mzilikazi's reign, sometimes with mentions alongside other royals like Prince Irhasa and Prince Mncijwana Khumalo. Significance: He represents a key branch of the royal family, continuing the lineage and leadership within the Ndebele nation, particularly in the context of the early 1800s/19th-century migrations and conflicts, notes
- Difolwane 1798– Son of Khunwana
- Marikana /Mametshe 1800– Son of Difolwane
- Ngwabane 1802– Son of Marikana /Mametshe

Ngwabane had several sons, *founding the main contemporary branches:*

- Line of Mametshe:1912
 - Ngwabane 1948 (son of Mametshe)
- Line of Mabowe:1914
 - Aaron 1945, Phaswane 1947, Mkabi 1952, Mametshe 1954 all passed away
- Line of Mohube /Mrube 1916 – Sons of Mohube /Mrube /Skhulo: Mametshe1958, Lebotsa 1965

-ROYAL RESTORATION LINE 2022 Key figure: Spumendo /Mabowe), 1958
the only surviving son of Mhube/ Mrube:

- **6.1 Summary of the Restoration Lineage**

Mahlangu → Mrhabuli → Khunwana → Difolwane → Mametshe/ Marikana → Ngwabane → Mohube/ Mrube(Skhulo) → Spumendo/ Mabowe (son of the Great Wife) → [Contemporary generation: Ikosi Mrhabuli II]

- Mabowe (son of Mohube) was recognized as the restorer and Ikosi of the revived of Ndzunza Mrhabuli Royal House. Formally restored by **His Majesty King Mabhoko III**, sovereign of the Ndzundza Ndebele nation. **Ikosi Mrhabuli II** now reigns as the senior traditional leader of the restored house. At Kwa Mrhabuli Royal (The 1) in Mpumalanga Province under JS Moroka Local Municipality also at Kwa Mrhabuli Royal (The1) in Mpumalanga Province under Thembisile Hani Local Municipality

KEY HISTORICAL NOTES:

- The house was displaced for generations after Mrhabuli's murder (c. 1795).
- Survivors used the name Mokgabudi (Sotho adaptation of "Mrhabuli") for concealment.
- Restoration in the 21st century closed a 200-year cycle of exile and fragmentation.
- The house's return validates Mrhabuli's ancient strategy of dispersal to ensure lineage survival.

This structured lineage documents both the historical continuity and the resilient survival of the House of Mrhabuli, whose calculated exile preserved the royal bloodline for eventual restoration under modern Ndzundza kingship.

The restoration of the House of Mrhabuli/Mokgabudi is not merely a political event but the culmination of a centuries-long historical narrative. It represents the healing of a rupture caused by usurpation and violence in the late 18th century. The survival of the lineage through strategic exile, its perseverance through colonial fragmentation, and its formal reintegration into the Ndzundza polity affirm the resilience of the kingdom's institutions and the enduring power of its historical memory. The story of this royal house encapsulates the broader themes of survival, adaptation, and identity preservation that characterize the history of the Ndzundza Ndebele people.

References & Further Reading:

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- Stanly Loba Mabena Author Blind Justice
- Simon Jezi Ntuli Managing Director Royal Ndzundza Kingdom
- Phineas Mhlanga (Elder) Royal Ndzandza Historian
- Songani Felix Mahlangu Royal Ndzundza Historian
- For further reading history and migration of Amendebele

ARCHIVES KWA MASA BLINK WATER The Kings who are buried there.

1, Mrhabuli

2, Maridile

3, Kawule

4, Somalila

5, Mqwezane

6, Phetha

7, Ndimande

8, Dzela

9, Phaswane

10, Sinden

11, Mghoboli

12, Mghesha

Historical Verification & Purpose Statement

This documented account of the **Mrhabuli Royal House (Mokgabudi)** has been compiled to serve as an authoritative reference for the general public, academic scholars, historians, and all parties interested in the rich tapestry of Ndzundza Ndebele history and traditional leadership. Its primary purpose is to inform, educate, and provide clarity on the historical lineage, customary succession principles, and the significant modern restoration of this foundational royal house.

The information presented herein is the product of meticulous research, synthesizing multiple streams of evidence. This includes the critical analysis of **oral tradition narratives** preserved across generations within the Ndzundza community and the direct descendants of the Mrhabuli line, cross-referenced with **documented scholarly works** and historical data. Key sources consulted include the research of scholars such as C.J. Van Vuuren, the findings of the Commission on Traditional Leadership Disputes and Claims, and other accredited historical and anthropological studies on Ndebele kingship and social structure.

This synthesis aims to present a coherent historical narrative that respects both the depth of living oral history and the rigor of academic scholarship. It is intended to affirm the legitimacy of the restoration based on verifiable lineage and customary law, and to contribute to the enduring record of the Ndzundza Ndebele nation. This document stands as a testament to a recovered history and a restored legacy.

Thus recorded for knowledge, continuity, and historical truth.

