

Ndzundza Mabhoko Royal line - from King Musi to the present king.

1. Origins: King Musi (17th Century)

- The history of the Ndzundza begins with Musi.
- Musi was a Nguni-speaking leader who settled in the region north of present-day Pretoria around the 1600s.
- He had several sons, including Manala and Ndzundza.
- After Musi's death, a succession dispute broke out.

The Split

Manala, the eldest son, became leader of the senior house.

Ndzundza, another son, broke away and formed a separate royal house.

This created the two main Southern Ndebele divisions:

1. Manala Royal Kingdom
2. Ndzundza Mabhoko Royal Kraal

This split shaped all later Ndzundza history.

2. Early Ndzundza Kings (18th Century)

After Ndzundza established his own following, the Ndzundza house developed independently.

Early rulers include:

- Ndzundza

- Hlungwana
- Mntungwa
- Magoboli
- Bongwe
- Sindeni
- Mahlangu

During this period:

- The Ndzundza settled in areas of present-day Mpumalanga.
- They developed cattle-based wealth.
- They strengthened clan identity under the surname Mahlangu.
- Internal Nguni conflicts were common but manageable.

3. King Mabhoko (Early 1800s)

The name “Mabhoko” comes from one of the most powerful Ndzundza kings:

King Mabhoko kaMahlangu

He ruled during the violent Mfecane/Difaqane period (early 19th century).

- Conflict with Mzilikazi

The Ndzundza were attacked by Mzilikazi, founder of the Northern Ndebele kingdom (later in Zimbabwe).

- Mzilikazi raided Ndzundza cattle and territory.
- The Ndzundza were temporarily scattered.

- They regrouped in mountainous areas for defense.

King Mabhoko became famous for militarising and fortifying the nation.

From this time, the Ndzundza Royal House became widely known as **Ndzundza Mabhoko**

4. Settlement in the Steelpoort / Mapoch Area

After the wars, the Ndzundza settled permanently in eastern Transvaal (now Mpumalanga).

They built strongholds in:

- Roosenekal
- Belfast
- Middelburg
- Groblersdal
- The Steelpoort valley

Their most famous fortress became Mapoch's Caves, later named after King Nyabela.

These caves were nearly impregnable and symbolized resistance.

5. King Nyabela (Mapoch) – War with the Boers (1882–1883)

One of the most important rulers:

Nyabela Mabhoko - Also called Mapoch.

Background

Ruled during expansion of the South African Republic (Transvaal Boers).

The Boers demanded:

- Labour
- Taxes

- Submission to white authority

Nyabela resisted.

The Mapoch War (1882–1883)

- Boer forces besieged Mapoch's Caves.
- The siege lasted several months.
- The Boers cut off food and water supplies.

Eventually:

- Nyabela surrendered in 1883.
- He was imprisoned.
- Ndzundza land was confiscated.
- Thousands of Ndzundza were forced into indentured farm labour.

This was the greatest turning point in Ndzundza history.

6. Destruction and Scattering (Late 1800s–Early 1900s)

After defeat:

1. Ndzundza farms were auctioned to white settlers.
2. Families were divided.
3. People were placed on Boer farms as labour tenants.
4. Political power was broken.

But:

1. Royal lineage survived.
2. Cultural identity remained strong.
3. Ndebele house painting and beadwork flourished despite oppression.

7. 20th Century Survival

During:

- Union of South Africa (1910)
- Apartheid (1948–1994)

The Ndzundza were relocated into homelands such as KwaNdebele.

Despite political suppression:

- The Royal House continued under traditional leadership.
- Clan praise poetry (izithakazelo) was preserved.
- Cultural revival movements grew.

8. Post-1994 Democratic South Africa

After 1994:

- Traditional leadership structures were legally recognized.
- Land restitution processes began.
- The Ndzundza royal house regained formal recognition in South Africa.

9. The Current King: Ingwenyama Mabhoko III

The present ruler is:

Ingwenyama Mabhoko III

King of the Ndzundza Mabhoko.

He represents:

- i. Continuation of the Musi lineage
- ii. Restoration of royal dignity
- iii. Cultural preservation
- iv. Leadership in Mpumalanga traditional affairs

The title Ingwenyama means “lion,” symbolizing kingship.

His reign focuses on:

- i. Land restoration claims
- ii. Cultural revival
- iii. Youth leadership programs
- iv. Recognition of Ndzundza heritage sites

Simplified Royal Line (Major Rulers)

1. Musi (Founder of Southern Ndebele)
2. Ndzundza (Founder of the Ndzundza house)
3. Early successors (Hlungwana → Mntungwa → Magoboli → Bongwe → Sindeni → Mahlangu)
4. Mabhoko
5. Successors leading to Nyabela

6. Nyabela (Mapoch)

7. 20th-century transitional kings

8. Ingwenyama Mabhoko III (Current king)

Why the Ndzundza History Matters

The Ndzundza Mabhoko story is one of:

- Royal succession disputes
- Survival during Mfecane wars
- Armed resistance against colonial conquest
- Land dispossession
- Cultural resilience
- Modern restoration of dignity

They are one of the most historically resistant and culturally distinct Ndebele groups in Southern Africa.