

oral stories

1. King Musi – The Wise Founder

Oral Story

The foundational Manala narrative centres on King Musi's blindness and succession dilemma.

- In his old age, Musi became blind and frail. His Great Wife had died, and he was cared for by the second wife - mother of Ndzundza, a younger son.
- According to tradition, when Musi sent his eldest heir Manala to hunt an imbuduma (wildebeest), Ndzundza's mother tried to manipulate the succession by giving him the iNamrhali, a powerful, mystical staff or beads used in coronation that could mimic a child's cry.

Proverbial Theme

- Ukuhamba ungaboni, kodwa umkhondo uwubonisa indlela - You may walk without seeing, but traces show the way.

This proverb reflects Musi's blindness yet deep wisdom in lineage decisions.

Cultural Significance

- The iNamrhali symbolizes legitimate authority and the spiritual connection between king and people - what makes a monarch worthy of respect and obedience.

2. The Peace of Noqoli

Oral Story

When Manala and Ndzundza nearly killed each other in their struggle for leadership, an elderly woman named Noqoli intervened.

- She reprimanded both men and mediated peace, resulting in the isiVumelano sakoNoqoli - the Agreement of Noqoli, which allowed both houses to rule, with Manala keeping the senior seat at KwaMnyamana (Wonderboom area) and Ndzundza establishing in the east.
- A condition was that they would never fight; if they did, misfortune would haunt the Ndebele.

Proverb and Meaning

- “Umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu” – A person is a person through people.
- This Nguni proverb underscores the need for community mediation and how leadership is collective, not solitary - rooted in unity and respect for elders.

3. Sibindi - The Warrior King

Oral Story

Sibindi, son of Mdibane, recalls a time when the Manala faced the advancing armies of Mzilikazi Khumalo.

- According to oral history, Sibindi initially tried diplomacy - offering his daughter for peace - but was betrayed by Mzilikazi's forces when he lent warriors for a hunt.
- Sibindi then rallied not just Manala but also Ndzundza warriors, saying his praise line: “Ngushlangu sidabula udaka mhlana...” — roughly “We cut through the mud, even if we fall in the deep places of Somazabanye.”

Proverbial Lesson

- “Isitha sokungcola sauhlulwa ngobuqhawe” – The enemy of filth is defeated by courage.
- A proverb reflecting bravery against strong foes, emphasising how communal resistance and unity can protect a people.

4. Magutshona, Mrawu, Ncagu, Buyambo – Builders of Settlement Names

Cultural Roles & Place Legacies

Several rulers after Manala — Magutshona, Mrawu, Ncagu, Buyambo — are remembered less in dramatic myth and more for establishing settlements and boundary names across Manala land such as:

- eMaruleni(place of marula trees)
- KoNonduna(place of the chiefs)
- eMbilaneni(holy place)

These names themselves act as living proverbs — geographic phrases that teach community identity

and history based on environment and leadership.

5. Silamba and Mdedlangeni – Resistance and Strategy

Oral Theme

- Silamba, who ruled during late 1800s, consolidated the Manala kingdom after devastating wars with the Khumalo under Mzilikazi.
- Mdedlangeni, his son, is associated in tradition with strategic negotiation and mass mobilization against colonial encroachment.

Proverbial Saying

- “Akukhali ngeke kufike umlilo ungakhali” – Fire will not start without a spark.
- This reflects persistence through struggle — the idea that resistance requires both wisdom and courage to spark liberation.

6. Mabhena I and Mdibane – Expansion and Naming Identity

Oral Theme

- Mabhena I expanded Manala territory north and south, reinforcing boundaries with Ndebele neighbours and other tribal groups.
- Mdibane is remembered for stability and space building — reinforcing the authority of Manala before colonial pressures.

Proverb

- “Indlela ibuzwa kwabaphambili” – The way is asked of those ahead.

- This praises leadership that looks forward for community growth and wise decision-making.

7. Enock Makhosoke II Mabhena – Modern Custodian

Oral Themes

In contemporary oral culture, King Enock Makhosoke II is associated with:

- Education and empowerment: It is said elders remind younger generations that “inkosi ayilali” — a king never sleeps, meaning a leader should always be vigilant and proactive - a phrase applied to his emphasis on education and community upliftment.
- Custodian of culture: Many elders recount how the king’s duty is to ensure ritual continuity with ancestors, seen in annual events where kingship prayers (izibongo) are recited proclaiming lineage:

“Ndebele zethu, sihamba nale nsika - Manala, siphethe ngokuhlakanipha”

–“Our Ndebele, walk with this pillar - Manala, lead with wisdom.”

Proverb

- “Inkosi ayibaseyi ngaphandle” – A king does not leave others behind.
- This stresses that leadership exists to protect and raise the entire community and that kingship is measured by service and care, not domination.

Summary

Leader Message	Oral Theme	Common Proverbial
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Musi wisdom “Walk by track, not sight.”		Succession drama,

Manala & Noqoli "Ubuntu through people."		Peace–unity agreement	
Sibindi	Courage vs outsiders	"Enemy defeated by courage."	
Builders (Magutshona–Buyambo)	Place identity	Settlement names as memory	
Silamba/Mdedlangeni	Resistance & strategy	"Fire needs spark."	
Mabhena I/Mdibane	Expansion & consolidation	"Ask those ahead."	
Enock Makhosoke II	Service & empowerment	"King leaves none behind."	