

**DYNAMICS OF DEMOCRACY AND HUMAN RIGHTS
AMONG THE NDEBELE OF ZIMBABWE, 1818-1934**

BY

SABELO JEREMIAH NDLOVU-GATSHENI

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**Department of History
Faculty of Arts
University of Zimbabwe**

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is at once a profound historical reconstruction of an African polity, and a deeply informed mediation on key Ndebele concepts and ideas. Throughout the thesis, the Ndebele historical experiences are consistently discussed in relation to a broad range of historiography and critical-scientific theory of hegemony and democracy and human rights.

The analysis is specifically focused on the destruction of the autonomy of the decentralized Khumalo clans, the construction of Ndebele hegemony in the midst of the Mfecane revolution, the expansion of the Ndebele state into a tolerant and heterogeneous settled nation north of the Limpopo river, the colonial encounter with the Ndebele state in the 1860s, imperialist violence of the 1890s, and the subsequent colonization of the Ndebele. These concrete historical processes marked the long and complex experiences of the Ndebele, which witnessed a clash of hegemonic projects and re-configuration of power politics. The history of the Ndebele was consistently characterized by the ambiguity of tendencies of domination versus resistance as the Ndebele rebelled against both pre-colonial African despots like Zwibe and Shaka as well as against colonial conquest. The Ndebele also fought to achieve material security, political autonomy, cultural independence, social justice, human dignity and tolerant governance even within their state in the face of an Ndebele ruling elite that sought to maintain its political dominance and material privileges through a delicate combination of patronage, accountability, exploitation, and limited coercion.

Thus the thesis is centred on the problem of the relation between coercion and consent during different phases of Ndebele history up to their encounter with colonialism. The analysis, therefore, outlines major shifts from migratory kingdom to settlement and highlights contradictions, conflict, tension and social cleavages that permitted conquest, desertions, raiding, assimilation, domination, exploitation as well as social security, communalism and tolerance as values which combined and co-existed uneasily, periodically and tendentially in the Ndebele society and that were articulated in varied and changing idioms, languages, cultural traditions and institutions.

Finally, the thesis shows how the Ndebele tried to resist western imperialist forces which were intolerant of their sovereignty and cultural autonomy, and brings out aspects of clashes between concepts of rights and how the British imperialists used a combination of open violence on the Ndebele and looting of their material wealth to destroy the Ndebele state between 1893 and 1897. It also grapples with some of the ambiguities and contradictions of the colonial encounter and the equally ambiguous Ndebele reaction to early colonial rule in the period 1898 to 1934. Moreover, from a longer-term perspective, the issues raised by the study have important resonance with current concerns around democratization, sovereignty, legitimacy, and violence in Zimbabwe.

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ABBREVIATIONS

A. M. E. C	American Episcopal Church
A. M. H. C	Africa Mission Home Church
B.B.P	Bechuanaland Border Police
B.S.A.Co.	British South Africa Company
B.S.A.P	British South African Police
CODESRIA	Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa
C.N.C	Chief Native Commissioner
D. R. C	Dutch Reformed Church
(ed.)/ (eds.)	Editor/Editors
Fig.	Figure
I.D.S	Institute of Development Studies
J.A.H	Journal of African History.
Jr.	Junior
L.M.S	London Missionary Society
M.H.S.	Matebele Home Society
NADA	Native Affairs Department Annual
NC/NCs	Native Commissioner(s)
No.	Number
Rev.	Reverend

R. B. V. A

Rhodesia Bantu Voters Association

R. I. C. U

Rhodesia Industrial Commercial

Workers Union

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