Tribal leadership: the traditional and modern leadership of the Xhosa, Zulu and Swazi of South Africa

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May, 1998
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Presented to Dr. Joanne Ciulla
April 13, 1998
INTRODUCTION

Charismatic leadership, bridge leadership, communication and vision and leadership, decision-making and leadership, gender and leadership. How many times have we, as leadership scholars, encountered these phrases and buzz words throughout the course of our leadership studies? It seems as if they are around every corner, waiting for further discussion and debate. They have been applied to businesses and organizations through projects, service learning experiences, and internships. Case studies and real-life examples are used all the time in order to learn about the discipline of leadership studies.

The above mentioned key words appear in all areas of leadership studies. They can also be found when using history to teach leadership. Historical figures and events are analyzed and discussed using present day leadership theories and concepts, such as charismatic or transactional leadership. Combining current events and history is an effective way of applying leadership ideas. It is a simple concept and yields a high level of understanding because the outcome is already known and one can discuss whether a certain leader’s style of leadership was effective or not given their situation. Also, studying historical events can assist leadership scholars in consulting those in current situations that are similar to past situations on how to approach the leadership dilemma or problem at hand. This is done in order to produce the most successful outcome.

A final area where these buzz words will be encountered is when using culture to educate about leadership. There are countless studies on how leadership styles and traits differ across cultures. There are certain traits that one country may value as
being necessary for a good leader and yet, there may be another culture that values the complete opposite traits in their leaders.

As can be seen, the leadership discipline is varied and complex, with many different approaches. There is not one approach that is considered the best, however a combination of all will probably have the greatest effect on scholars and allow the greatest amount of knowledge to be gained. This can be observed in the curriculum of the Jepson School of Leadership Studies, the only undergraduate leadership school in the country. This school’s curriculum is a combination of theory, history, contexts, and competencies.

What is the point? Why all the talk about how to approach teaching leadership? Last semester, I took the Leadership in Community Organizations course at the Jepson School and a guest came from South Africa and spoke about the transitions that many South African tribes are going through in order to assimilate to the new democracy in their country. This speaker made me start to think. If it is important to look at other countries and apply leadership theories to their cultures, why has no one done an extensive study of basic leadership styles in tribes, more specifically, in South African tribes? This question sparked my interest and challenged my leadership skills. I believe that one can learn a lot about leadership styles by studying the most basic forms of leadership within these tribes. Also, it is interesting to observe how these leadership styles may have been changed in order to meet the challenges of the growing, modern world. “... In the process of social change, a society will always tend to adjust to new
conditions through its existing social institutions. These institutions will survive, but with new values, in a changed social system. "

There are three major tribes in South Africa that have experienced significant changes in their leadership styles. They are the Xhosa, Zulu, and Swazi tribes. Through research, it becomes evident that these three tribes, although rooted in their tradition and customs, have had to face the modern world and adapt their own traditions accordingly. By studying these tribes and their traditional and modern leadership styles, one can find examples of four main leadership topics. These are one, charismatic leadership, two, the relationship between gender and leadership, three, bridge leadership, and four, the relationship between communication, vision, and leadership.

Charismatic leadership is defined as having three components: envisioning, energizing, and enabling. The charismatic leader embodies all three of these factors. First, "...by creating a vision, the leader provides a vehicle for people to develop commitment, a common goal around which people can rally, and a way for people to feel successful." Second, a leader energizes his/her followers by "...demonstrating personal excitement, expressing personal confidence, and seeking, finding, and using success." Third, the charismatic leader "...psychologically helps people act or perform in the face of challenging goals," which is also known as enabling.

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1 William Watson, Tribal Cohesion in a Money Economy, Oxford University Press, 1958, 228.
3 Ibid, 77-97.
According to Bernard Bass, charismatic leaders motivate their followers through strong identification and emotional ties.\(^5\) Charismatic leaders are responsible for the inspiration, awe, and empowerment of their followers.\(^6\)

Mangosuthu Buthelezi, the leader of the Zulu political force Inkatha, has been identified as a charismatic leader.\(^7\) His use of vision in communicating to the Zulu people is effective and amazing. Also, King Sobhuza of the Swazi tribe has been referred to as a charismatic leader and as holding a monopoly over Swazi symbols and traditions.\(^8\) The details and discussion of Buthelezi and Sobhuza as examples of charismatic leaders will be discussed later in further detail.

The role that gender plays in leadership is an area that has been extensively researched. Tradition states that male leaders were often regarded as the only answer to the leadership question. Today, women are becoming more prevalent in the leadership arena, but often leadership is still closed to women in these tribes. In Hackman, Furniss, Hills, and Paterson's study of gender-role characteristics, it states that

Perceptions generally associate leadership with masculinity. The ideal leader is expected to be directive, dominant, aggressive, and self-confident. In contrast, the traditional stereotype of femininity includes such behaviors as being emotional, passive, submissive, intuitive, nurturing, and indecisive; these attributes being negatively associated with leadership.\(^9\)

\(^8\) Collins, Elizabeth Ann, *The Creation of Tribalism in South Africa*, University of Virginia, 1969, 312.
Two of the three tribes being studied in this paper adhere to the previous quote regarding leadership and gender. Only one tribe, the Swazi, realizes the balance that can be achieved by creating a shared positions of authority between a male and a female.

The importance of leaders communicating a vision to their followers has been discussed by Kevin Barge in his book, *Leadership: Communication Skills for Organizations and Groups*. "A vision connects with people at an emotional level. A vision serves to bridge the past and the future." Leaders can communicate this vision using three different ways. "Leaders may communicate a vision through analogies, metaphors, and organizational stories. Leaders may communicate a vision through personification. Leaders may provide frames for viewing a vision." The importance of communicating vision in the Inkatha movement of the Zulu tribe is a main issue of this tribes' modern leadership and will be discussed in greater detail in a section later in this paper.

Bridge leadership is a new concept in leadership studies. It has recently been researched and developed by Dr. Joanne Ciulla at the University of Richmond. Bridge leaders are those leaders that can find the third way between two cultures. In other words, a bridge leader can build a "bridge" between two separate and distinct cultures, using the knowledge that he/she has of the two cultures.

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11 Ibid, 185.
12 Dr. Joanne Ciulla, University of Richmond Jepson School of Leadership Studies.
Through these brief introductions, the point begins to evolve that leadership can be studied and analyzed using tribal case studies. All three of these tribes are attempting to bridge the gap between the modern leadership world and their own traditional values and customs. Neither members of these tribes nor any other group, want to lose sight of their cultural identity. To change for the sake of change is not enough. It is necessary that one have the desire and these tribes, although they are becoming functioning members of modern government and classes, also want to adhere to their pasts. Tribal African leaders must not allow the destruction of tribal ties and customs which are still valued even in a modern society, and the polarization of social classes into opposed and hostile groups. The tribal heritage of the African people must be accommodated within this ‘modern’ framework. It is the interplay between these two sets of forces, the indigenous tribal society and the superimposed, ‘modern’ societal type, that will decide the shape and nature of the contemporary African state.\(^\text{13}\)

THE XHOSA

The traditional leadership of the Xhosa stemmed from clans and kinship. In fact, “…the preindustrial African society was typically based on a number of tribes and tribal polities, where access to political power was traditionally through kinship.”\(^{14}\) The idea of kinship and clans is one that spans across many tribes in South Africa and the nation of Africa as a whole. These clans were patriarchal and women were not allowed to participate in leadership or decision-making. Women were expected to stay in the home, but even there, the men were in charge. “Thus men’s power rested on domination over women in domestic domains ‘where men had powers over everybody’ and in public arenas ‘where what was agreed among men was final.’”\(^{15}\)

In leadership studies, the role of gender and respective theories are studied to understand differences in leadership styles. The Xhosa have a strong patriarchal system and it is this tradition that the intend to continue. However, the modern world is full of women’s rights and feminist opinions. Gendered leadership is another modern leadership theory that can be applied to the Xhosa tribe.

The Xhosa tribe and others are quite behind in the feminist movement. Looking at modern feminist theories, it becomes evident that, according to some feminists, this tribe could be considered as being in the dark ages and behind the times. For example, the Enlightenment feminist theory “…provides an image of woman as a rational, responsible agent; one who is able, if given a chance, to take care of herself, to further

her own possibilities." In the Xhosa tribe, women are not individuals, but property of their husbands and of men. "Young wives complained of husbands, mothers and sisters-in-law to cohorts encountered while collecting wood or drawing water beyond the homestead enclosure. Some talked back to men and older women, refusing to avert their eyes. Many were beaten. When they could take no more, they ran away from town." However, this is part of the tradition of their leadership and it is something that even the women of the tribes have grown accustomed to. The way this tribe adheres to its tradition is proof of what I mentioned earlier. Tribes want to continue tradition and hold onto their past while they also integrate themselves into the changing world. In the Xhosa tribe, "patriarchal power was key to the politics of these domains."  

The Xhosa polity...resembled a "tribal cluster" of genealogically related but politically independent chiefdoms...Individual Xhosa political units may have been autonomous, but they were never independent of the paramount chief or of the genealogically related chiefdom. The paramount was the head of a discernible Xhosa "nation" sharing a common language, royal lineage, and geographical origin.  

This quote demonstrates that not only does the Xhosa tribe consider itself a nation, but it also has smaller clans within the nation that need to be addressed. All clans need to feel that they are a part of the Xhosa identity. "Historically, the Xhosa's allegiance was to their clan, led by an inkosi (chief) whose status was gained through his

18 Ibid, p. 56.
mother."  The process by which a son became heir to the chief was based on the status of the current chief's wives from the Great House and Right-Hand House.

"...the heir to a chiefdom was the eldest son of the first-ranked wife of the Great House, and the eldest son of the second-ranked wife who controlled the Right-Hand House was the heir apparent."  This shows that the clans of the Xhosa and their leadership has been traditionally hierarchical as well as patriarchal, with women only playing the role of mother to possible heirs to the chiefdom.

"The Xhosa chief was the guardian of his people. He protected them from their enemies and had custody of their environment... (his) main task was to ensure that everyone had an equal share of the available resources."  The chief, however, did not hold absolute authority over his subjects. Often, his power was based on the consensus of his followers.  His councilors as well as representatives of dominating lineages and homesteads form a type of check and balance system to make sure that the chief was not abusing his power.

The Xhosa tribe in modern day Africa is continuing to uphold many of its traditional values, but must face change. One major change is that tribes are losing their individual identities in the eyes of the African government. "...the African peoples of southern, central, and eastern Africa today share a common ancestral language...they have christened the languages spoken throughout the areas as Bantu

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22 Ibid, p. 35.
23 Ibid, p. 36.
Therefore, the Xhosa fall under the jurisdiction of the Native Affairs Department whose “...purpose was to ‘obtain the active participation of the Bantu in the running of their own affairs in an indirect way’.” This proves that the Xhosa are not considered one tribe, but as a member of a larger group including the Zulu and the Swazi tribes. This creates an obstacle in retaining the Xhosa traditions of leadership and their customs because they are not being viewed as individual. Some of their beliefs and customs may be forgotten or overlooked if the Native Affairs Department bases their decisions on the affect it will have on the Bantu, as opposed to individual groups. This may also affect the Zulu and Swazi tribes.

The Bantu authorities are trying to include the chiefs of the smaller clans within the Xhosa tribe in the leadership process. However, “…instead of promoting modern Western notions of administration, the Bantu authorities would ‘make use of the old tribal system, to train the traditional leaders of the people for the task of governing…in an enlightened and progressive manner’.” In essence, these Bantu authorities are searching for a way to build a bridge between the traditional Xhosa society and the modern African government. However, these authorities also seem to realize that it is necessary to keep the Xhosa culture in tact so that the tribe will have a vested interest in its leadership.

There are three different areas where leadership studies can be applied to the Xhosa tribe of South Africa. These are in the areas of gendered

26 Ibid, p. 64.
leadership, decision-making, and bridge leadership. First, it is obvious from research that the Xhosa people still believe that a good leader is a male leader and that women should stay at home. The belief that leadership should focus on the male gender is a traditional belief that has been maintained. The "new" Xhosa ethnicity, although more closely tied to modern government, still has a strong patriarchal influence. "...the new ethnicity 'emphasized the need to control women' in the guise of protecting the integrity of the family...this gendered hierarchy was overtly spelled out on ritual occasions."  

Here, it is clear that men are still expected to be in authoritative and hold positions and women are supposed to focus on the home and family. "Customary law upheld the authority of men over women. Within households, only the "kraalhead" (a male) or his representative presided over deliberations...women might attend but, as a rule, spoke only when consulted."  

Leadership and government authority roles are still dominated by males. "The headman and his inkundla (big men) were the pivot of 'Native Administration'. While this male forum was defined as the 'voice of the people' in Native Administration, it was an exclusively male forum, dominated by older men."  

This lack of women's opinions has an impact on the culture as a whole. The needs and desires of women are not considered as important as those of men. Although leadership used to be considered a male dominated arena, "...Ellis and Wheeler point

27 Ibid, p. 70.
29 Ibid, 56.
out that women are as likely as men to subscribe to “great man” theories of leadership. However, in the political arenas of the Xhosa tribe and the modern African government, the big men, or inkundla, have the power.

Second, traditional Xhosa tribes have a system of checks and balances between their chiefs and councilors which affects who has the power in the tribe. The type of power which the chief of a clan or tribe of the Xhosa has is a combination of referent and legitimate power. Legitimate power is defined as “…position power…(and) emanates from one’s formal position within the organization and is based on the rights and privileges attributed to that position.” The members of the tribe do look up to their chief because of his title. However, the chief also has a relationship with his councilors, which is an example of referent power. “The relationship formed between leader and follower creates the power base.” This type of relationship emphasizes the need to reach a consensus in decision-making. “The chief’s power ultimately depended on obtaining the consensus of his subjects…the chief’s powers were severely circumscribed by his councillors.”

The chief’s position is respected and revered, therefore, the councillors are the main line of communication between the chief and his people and their authority came from the people, not the chief. The relationship between the councillors and the people is strong and proves that the councillors have a vested interest in the tribe. The

31 Barge, J. Kevin, Leadership: Communication Skills for Organizations and Groups, St. Martin’s Press, 1994, 175.
32 Ibid, 175.
34 Ibid. 36.
councillors tell the chief what the needs of the people are and, whether agreeable to the
chief or not, he has the obligation to work with the councillors to meet these needs.
The councillors have a considerable amount of power and can even force a chief to
resign if they feel he is not meeting the needs of his followers. Commitment to each
other is very important in the Xhosa tribe. This satisfies the definition of consensus set
forth by Fisher and Ellis. "Consensus implies not just agreement with the decision
reached, but commitment to it. In fact, members may be committed to a decision to
the extent that they work to put it into effect without ever fully agreeing with it."35

Third, the Xhosa tribe faces the dilemma of maintaining their tradition in the
face of modernization. Their emphasis was traditionally on clans but now they must
try and band together. "Dividing the people into tribes, that does not appeal to us
because now as we are, different nationalities staying together...Now we would not like
to be divided into different nationalities. We have stayed long with these other tribes
and now the Government is going to make confusion."36 Bridge leadership is the key
word in this situation. The chiefs and leaders of the Xhosa need to find a way to keep
the Xhosa tribe unified even if the government does choose to divide the people into
separate nationalities and smaller tribes. By combining the positive aspects of
traditional tribal life and modern tribal life, the chiefs and heads of the Xhosa tribe may
be able to create a third culture that is even more practical and beneficial then the
traditional and modern tribal life combined.

35 Ellis, Donald G. and Aubrey B. Fisher, Small Group Decision-Making: Communication and the Group
Studies, 1995, 64.
THE ZULU

“About six million strong, the Zulu are the single largest ethnic group in South Africa today, with relative linguistic and cultural homogeneity and a proud military past centering around the monarchy.”37 This tribe can be found in the KwaZulu/Natal province of South Africa and they are also a part of the Bantu-speaking people, which includes the Xhosa and Swazi tribes.38

Traditional leadership in the Zulu tribe focused on wards, or villages. Each ward consisted of a group of imzi, or homesteads, with each imzi led an imzi head and his family.39 A ward has a leader called an induna who is, “...put in position by the chief to convey to the people the chief’s commands and, lately, to act a judicial officer in a court of preparatory examination for cases in the ward concerned.”40 The wards all have allegiance to the chief of their tribe. The greater Zulu tribe consists of many smaller tribes that are each headed by a clan chief. The entire Zulu nation is led by the King and governed by the Republic of South Africa.

The induna, as noted before, is of great importance to the tribe because he offers a communication line to the head chief. He is respected as a chief would be and also helps in creating a sense of unity throughout the ward which, in turn, affects the unity of the Zulu nation.

As the induna’s powers of leadership increase, so is the feeling of membership of his ward followers intensified. Once a territorial division such as the ward has been in undisputed existence for any length of time, its inhabitants in any event come to think of themselves as members of a

40 Reader, D.H., Zulu Tribe in Transition, Manchester University Press, 1966, 244.
corporate group, acting together with common accord and mutual interests.\textsuperscript{41}

In essence, the induna is a sub-chief and plays an important role in the leadership of the Zulu tribe.

In recent time, Zulu chief position has begun to lose the respect and authority that it used to have in the past. Historically, the chief was the wealthiest member of the tribe and was its source of strength in war. The obligations of the chief towards the tribe is in direct response to the powers that the tribe allows the chief to assume. Some of these obligations include:

1. Have a care to the spiritual and hence the temporal welfare of the tribe.
2. Further the line of chiefly succession by marriage.
3. Act as diplomatic agent to the Administration on his people’s behalf.
4. Act as ambassador in relations with neighboring tribes.
5. Take action to satisfy (complaints of tribe) in accordance with tribal tradition and custom.\textsuperscript{42}

The chief also has the authority to delegate power to different members of his councils. Similar to the Xhosa tribe, the Zulu tribe does not give their chiefs absolute authority and, therefore, have a checks and balances system that keeps the chiefs from acting in anyway against his people or their wishes.

Moving from the traditional leadership of the Zulus to the modern day leadership, one word stands out in countless articles, journals, and books: Inkatha. “The Inkatha Freedom Party is portrayed as the guardian of the essence of Zuluness.”\textsuperscript{43}

\textsuperscript{41} Ibid, 244.
\textsuperscript{42} Ibid, 256.
Inkatha is led by Chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi. His goal is to use symbolism and the symbols of the Zulu culture in the past to today create a feeling of nationalism and unity among the Zulu people.

Buthelezi regards history as a means of cultural liberation...(as he stated), 'Your Zuluness, which is yours by history, is an essential quality of your South African status. It gives you a proud history, but as much as anything else, your Zuluness gives you the strength to wage the liberation struggle with me...Every part of KwaZulu is rich in history of the nation. The people of this area walk tall as Zulus.'

Inkatha appeals to many different Zulu people by using the history of their tribe as a foundation for support. “It is Inkatha’s perceived ability to straddle the ‘traditional’ world as well as the ‘modern’ world that makes it attractive to its membership.”

The Inkatha movement and its connection to the traditions of the Zulu people can be seen as an example of bridge leadership. The king of the Zulu nation, Goodwill Zwelithini represents the traditions of the people and Buthelezi represents the politics of the people.

His majesty and I share a platform and symbolize the unity of our people. His Majesty symbolizes the deep spirit of unity for the Zulu people and I symbolize the political determination to pursue time-honored values which have always been important in the struggle for liberty. Together His Majesty and I share the load which is placed on the Zulu nation. We will never be torn apart. (Buthelezi)

Buthelezi not only uses history to bring the Zulu people together but also symbols, either in people (King Shaka) or ancestral objects. These objects can be

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44 Ibid, 112.
46 Ibid, 111.
found in the KwaZulu Cultural Museum. "The symbols serve to hide and submerge the differences dividing Zulus today. They also legitimize Buthelezi’s rule by making visible and tangible a continuity of leadership that links the chief minister of KwaZulu to the leaders of the Zulu empire."\textsuperscript{47}

There are two main objections to the Inkatha Party. They are one, that it segregates men and women and two, that it is violent. First, the separation within the party is often under criticism. Inkatha claims that it is recreating the traditional culture of the Zulus. Within this culture, women were considered subordinate and were not allowed to participate in government or leadership. The "unbunto-bo tho syllabus" is one a way in which Inkatha enforces the subordination of women. Within the unbunto botho syllabus it is stated that, "In the family the man is the head. The woman knows that she is not equal to her husband. She addresses the husband as ‘father’...and refrain from exchanging words with men and if she does this reflects bad upbringing on her part."\textsuperscript{48} This type of attitude is highly criticized by feminist movements and by members of opposing parties of Inkatha.

The way that women are forbidden from taking on any type of leadership role is in response to what Buthelezi refers to as the Zulu tradition. This tradition of separating the sexes, however, is outdated in this day in age. Hobsbawm and Ranger argue that “...traditions are ‘invented,’ a process which he describes as one of ‘formalization and ritualization, characterized by reference to the past.'"\textsuperscript{49} Claiming

\textsuperscript{48} Ibid, 7.
\textsuperscript{49} Ibid, 4.
that women are not equal to men is an old tradition that does not fit with modern
culture. Buthelezi himself states that:

If I have one particular prayer it is that the once revered
spirit of African humanism-Ubunto/Botho-experiences
a rebirth throughout this continent in order that there be
ture reconciliation between all and that we learn to love
and to share with fervour and to agree to disagree with
intelligence and humility. There has been too much hate,
too much distrust, too much betrayal. It has tainted us all
and it is time we moved on.50

Although Buthelezi speaks of cultural tradition and nationalism, his Party is viewed by
some as too violent. Buthelezi has received criticism for condoning violence.

“Buthelezi’s issue of hundreds of automatic assault rifles to government functionaries,
including chiefs and headmen, means that traditional leaders are...being allowed to
terrorize the population by virtue of their traditional titles.”51

Also, Buthelezi claims to have a spiritual bond to the great king and warrior of
the Zulu people, Shaka. “In comparing himself to Shaka, Buthelezi both reminded
supporters and warned opponents that he-like Shaka-brought good to his people and
that he was an authentic leader of his people rather than a puppet of the apartheid
regime.”52 King Shaka is a figure of great importance in Zulu history. His name
cannot be mentioned without remembering the greatness of the Zulu tribe. Buthelezi
uses his connection to Shaka and Zulu history to rally even more support from his
followers.

51 Golan, Daphna, Inventing Shaka: Using History in the Construction of Zulu Nationalism, Lynne
52 Ibid, 141.
leader. Buthelezi founded Inkatha which is a visionary movement that has a high commitment base. "Inkatha...is marked by a hierarchy of power and respect, and a charismatic leadership." 55 Inkatha meets the characteristics of a vision in the following ways:

*A vision connects with people at an emotional level.* Inkatha uses symbolism and a tie to tradition and culture to do this. The museum of Zulu culture and Buthelezi’s appeals to the Zulu people to remember their history is an example.

*A vision serves to bridge the past and the future.* “Inkatha has attempted to forge a cohesive identity, by drawing on a popular memory of the past.” 56 This is a perfect example of bridging the gap between the past and the future.

Buthelezi also demonstrates the other two characteristics of a charismatic leader through his energizing and enabling. This can be seen in the way in which he communicates his vision. Barge lists three ways in which a leader can communicate his/her vision. “Leaders may communicate a vision through analogies, metaphors, and organizational stories. Leaders may communicate a vision through personification. Leaders may provide frames for viewing a vision.” 57 Buthelezi can be associated with these characteristics in the following ways:

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55 Ibid, 117.
Leaders may communicate a vision through analogies, metaphors, and organizational stories. Buthelezi tells stories of Shaka, warriors, and Zulu tradition which communicates his vision of a forming a strong Zulu nation. One particular analogy that he used with the women in the Inkatha Women’s Brigade is that of a custodian. “You women are the custodians of our cultural heritage, you must warn young people against such nonsensical gibberish. You are the custodians of this heritage and that is why our languages are called our Mothers’ tongues.” (December 15, 1979.)

This also demonstrates energizing and enabling because Buthelezi is empowering the women of the Inkatha Women’s Brigade to realize their importance within the movement. He is also giving them a way in which they may reach the goal of a strong and independent Zulu culture by stating that they are the “custodians of our cultural heritage.”

Leaders may communicate a vision through personification. “Leaders who use personification live and breathe the vision. They are the vision.” Buthelezi founded the Inkatha party and is associated as being the main drive behind it. He is Inkatha.

Leaders may provide frames for viewing a vision. “Framing involves placing the vision in a larger context so to emphasize its importance or significance.” When Inkatha was first founded, much of its drive came from being anti-apartheid. This

59 Ibid, 185.
concept of forming one party to help combat the large force of apartheid was a frame in which Buthelezi used.

Reiterating the obligation to South Africa and, more specifically, Zulu, tradition is also a larger frame that Buthelezi uses. For example, Buthelezi stressed the obligation to South Africa to the Inkatha Women’s Brigade on December 15, 1979. He stated, “I have simply indicated the areas in which I value womanhood. It is for you to deliberate on these things and its I your responsibility to come back to me and say: ‘This is what we will do for you, for Inkatha, and for South Africa.’”

The message of obligation to South Africa energizes the people because they may see themselves on a larger scale than just establishing Zulu pride, but also national pride. Also, Buthelezi is challenging these women and asking for their help. He is saying that it is possible for them to make a difference. He is enabling them to act.

60 Ibid, 185.
THE SWAZI

It is a misnomer to use the words ‘old’ and ‘new’ when describing systems in Swaziland, as the incumbents of the structures are essentially the traditional authorities who have adapted remarkably to the needs of modern government. At the apex of both the old and new systems stands the traditional monarch, the king. His present-day functions are therefore blended with aspects of both.  

This quote accurately sums up both the traditional and modern leadership of the Swazi tribe. This tribe has done an interesting job of blending both the past and the future together to deal with the modern and changing world of today.

“In Swazi culture the highest traditional political, economic, and ritual powers are shared between a hierarchy male ruler and his mother.” The king receives his ranking based on where his mother is located within the hierarchy. The two of them rule together and keep each other under a unique checks and balances system. “The king owes his position to a woman whose rank-more than his own personal qualities-determined his selection for kingship, and between the two rulers there is a delicate balance of power.” The key word here is “balance.” This is a word that has often been discussed in leadership classes. The paradigm that the leader should rule above his/her people has slowly been replaced with the idea that leaders and followers should work together; that balance is the key to effective leadership. “In the new paradigm, followers and leaders do leadership. They are in the leadership relationship together. They are the ones who intend real changes that reflect their mutual purpose…Followers

and leaders develop a relationship wherein they influence one another as well as the organization and society, and that is leadership."

The Swazi have discovered a balance between the king and his mother. It is even more interesting to note that this balance is occurring between a man and a woman. Both the Xhosa and the Zulu tribes believe women are unequal to men which makes the situation in the Swazi tribe so much more interesting. "They (the king and his mother) are expected to assist and advise each other in all activities and to complement each other. Today...the king is educated and shoulder more of the administrative responsibilities, letting the burden of ritual fall primarily on the queen mother." The South African government provides an example of this balance. "A 'Mother Culture' was employed to advise on matters of custom and ceremonial. She was somewhat improbably said...to be consulted on occasion by King Sobhuza himself." The sharing of power and duties between the male and female leaders continues down from the monarchy and is also an important part of Swazi local government.

The king and queen mother do not act alone. They do not have absolute authority in decision-making. There are four main councils that assist the king and queen mother in their duties. These are the Inner Council (Liqoqo), the Swazi National Council (Libandla), the tinkundla system and the cabinet/government service. The Inner Council members are unknown to the public and are continually in close contact

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66 Ibid, 33.
with the king and queen mother, advising them of any public or traditional affairs that need to be addressed. For example, the Inner Council may advise the king on the appointment of a prime minister.

The Libandla is more representative of the Swazi people. "Every prince, chief, headman, and also any other adult man who is a citizen of Swaziland may attend the meetings of the Libandla."69

The tinkundla system is the division of Swaziland into forty regional centers to promote electoral colleges and elections and the promotion of the ideals of the Swazi people. This concern for his people can be seen in Sobhuza's disappointment in the initial Constitution that had been set forth by England when the Swazi became independent. He set forth an investigation in order to find out the wishes of his people. This is how the tinkundla system came to be.70

Finally, the cabinet service involves a prime minister who oversees different areas of the cabinet (education, health, finance, etc..) to help the king run the country more smoothly. The involvement of a prime minister in affairs of the Swazi tribe is an example of mixing traditional leadership with modern leadership, otherwise defined as bridge leadership.

Swaziland is divided into four main districts, sifundzas, and each of these districts has its own chief, sikhulu. This chief is the political and legislator, administrative, legal, economic, social, and ritual head of his tribe.71 The relationship between the chief and his people is strong because he plays such a major role in the

70 Ibid, 27.
lives of his followers. Similar to the king and the queen mother, “In his area, he centralizes law, economics, and ritual; if his mother is alive, she shares with him the responsibilities of control and is in charge of the main section of the homestead.”

This main section is called the indlunkulu or “great hut” and is considered a family shrine. The mother of the chief is revered and feared and her control over this private hut is symbolic of her equal control within the tribe. The balance of power between gender and leadership is a tradition that is a part of each level of Swazi government.

Another leadership concept that can be applied to the Swazi culture as mentioned in the introduction is defining King Sobhuza as a charismatic leader as well as a bridge leader. In this case, the two are uniquely bound together by Sobhuza’s desire to blend tradition with the modern world (bridge leadership) as well as retain a cultural identity and vision (charismatic leadership).

A bridge leader finds a third way between two cultures based on experiences in both. “The success of this process of cultural nationalism depended on Sobhuza’s skillful blending and balancing of a traditional Swazi institutional infrastructure with Western symbols and of new Western-style organizations with traditional Swazi symbols.” This is an example of, not only bridge leadership, but the creation of a vision that requires commitment from the people. This is also a component of charismatic leadership.

73 Ibid, 21.
74 Ibid, 132.
In order for Sobhuza to build a bridge, he had to give his people something to have faith in while trying to obtain this goal. This is another example of charismatic leadership, specifically the process known as enabling. Ensuring that Swazi culture was not going to become extinct in the face of change was critical. “Sobhuza went beyond the more familiar techniques of political diplomacy...to familiar Swazi institutions and the deeper resources of Swazi culture to build up patriotism and national pride.”

King Sobhuza reiterated old customs and rituals, as well as the importance of his partner in leadership, his mother.

With King Sobhuza and his charismatic leadership paving the way, the transition from traditional to modern day government has run smoothly with respects to the monarchy and the national level of government. The king and the queen mother have been allowed to retain their authority and positions even in the face of change. “A modern parliament and government service have been built into the traditional political framework in such a way that they further enhance the monarchy and its supporting councils.”

However, transition has not been as easy at the local level within the tribes. The continuing difficulty of promoting change at the local level proves that, although King Sobhuza was a charismatic leader and worked to involve all Swazi people in this process, many times even great leaders do not reach all their goals.

The new government systems that are being adopted by the monarchy and its councils are working together with the traditional leadership, but they are overtaking tribal life. “It must be reiterated that many of these innovations and Western

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75 Ibid, 142.
institutions which pose a real threat to local leadership, are quite acceptable at the macro level of Swazi society...While the concept of tribalism is dwindling on the local level, Swazi nationalism is still a strong binding force at the macro-level."\(^77\) If the monarchy can maintain a certain foundation in traditional Swazi culture, then hopefully the customs and group identity will continue down to the tribes. "Swazi have no flag or national emblem by which to rally group sentiment, but the names of kings and such other verbal symbols as songs of praise and anthems serve a similar purpose."\(^78\) The king and queen mother as well as traditional events and customs are important in rallying Swazi nationalism.

The Swazi tribe of South Africa faces the problem of creating a unifying cultural identity that will strengthen its leadership. The rate and success of transition varies between the national level and the local level. There has always been a debate between the Swazi of South Africa and the Swazi of Swaziland as to who are the true Swazi people. This is a challenge to Swazi leaders and has been in the past as well. Enos Mabuza started a movement similar to the Zulu’s Inkantha movement and called it the Inyanda National Movement.\(^79\) There was a struggle between Mabuza and the King of the Swazi, King Sobhuza, based on the ‘who are the true Swazi people?’ debate which typifies the Swazi’s search for a distinct culture.

\(^{77}\) Ibid, 30.
\(^{79}\) Collins, Elizabeth Ann, *The Creation of Tribalism in South Africa*, University of Virginia, 1969, 312
CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

The words “traditional” and “modern” are found throughout this paper in reference to the Xhosa, Zulu, and Swazi tribes of South Africa. Many of their traditional leadership styles and modern leadership movements can be characterized using leadership theories. For example, Buthelezi and Sobhuza as charismatic leaders. It becomes clear that the leaders of these tribes are attempting to build a bridge to the future so that their people may be a part of the modern world. The challenge is creating a vision and making change desirable to all members of the community.

“Any race or tribe that has no leaders to instill into it the urge for development and progress in this period of enlightenment is doomed to become and remain hewers of wood and drawers of water.” The leaders in the Xhosa, Zulu, and Swazi tribes are the keys to their success, even if these leaders are not the kings or chiefs of the tribe.

The theories and concepts that we, as leadership scholars, study are not only applicable to modern leadership, but tribal leadership as well. This paper has shown that it is important to look at and analyze other countries and cultures in order to further understand these theories. Also, by doing this, perhaps we can someday consult these developing countries in creating the most effective and successful leadership system.

Promoting change and developing a nation is challenging. Traditions and rituals are a part of these tribal cultures and to change them for the sake of change would be pointless. I believe that the goal of the leaders of these tribes should be to find a way

to maintain the positive and important traditions and adapt the positive and important aspects of modern leadership in order to form a new “culture” for their tribes. It is only by combining the best of both worlds that the leaders of these tribes will be able to effectively guide their people into the modern and developing world.
WORKS CITED


