A Royal Ritual in a Changing Political Context.
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In this article I examine how and why a particular ritual, the Newala of the Swazi of South-East Africa, persisted and served as a resource of political leadership from the precolonial period to independence. The basic ideology validating the Newala is the unique power of hereditary kingship (bikhosi).

The first time I attended the Newala was in 1934, and on the basis of my initial fieldwork I described it as "A Ritual of Kingship" (Kuper 1944). Subsequently, this article, with slight amendments, was developed as "The Drama of Kingship" in An African Aristocracy (Kuper 1947a: 196-225), one of the early anthropological studies of a political system in historical perspective. I concluded:

"The Incwala dramatizes actual rank developed historically: it is "a play of kingship." In the ceremony the people see which clans and people are important. Sociologically, it serves as a graph of traditional status on which mapped by ritual are the roles of the king, his mother, the princes, councillors, priests, chiefs, queens, princesses, commoners, old and young [...]. The major adjustment, the balance of power between the king, his mother, the princes, and commoners, is a central theme. A study of groups and individuals who do not participate in the Incwala completes the graph of rank in Swazi society, and reflects the situation of European dominance over an increasingly stratified society" (Kuper 1947a: 225).1

That study was made at the time when British colonialism appeared to be firmly entrenched, but I was still able to observe and describe a distinctive Swazi culture and the persistence of a social structure.

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1. It would have been more correct to write "the Newala" or simply "Incwala" instead of "the Incwala" since in siSwati the article is implicit in the noun-prefix. There is a subtle distinction in meaning when the root is used without the prefix; the root alone is often more forceful. This is particularly clear in the distinction between Ingwenyama (the Lion) as title for the king, and Ngwenyama, the king in action.
centered in Swazi kingship. Distinctiveness and persistence did not mean rigidity and the inability to change; on the contrary, there were deliberate as well as fortuitous changes.

The Centralisation of a Monarchy and the Growth of Ritual

In the precolonial period of migration and contact, several African kingdoms emerged in Southern Africa, and the political power of their respective and sometimes rival rulers was manifest in rituals similar to that of the Ncwala, with warriors assembling at central villages to fortify their leaders and, in turn, to be fortified by their mystical powers. Contact between rulers was not limited to warfare; it led to ties of inter-marriage, exchange of goods, and, what as yet has not been adequately recognized, political experimentation through deliberate incorporation of foreigners attributed with special knowledge in major fields of government. In Swazi oral history there are several instances of individuals from lineages renowned for expertise (‘deep knowledge’), i.e. specialists (tinyanga), reputed to have special ritual-cum-technical skills, e.g. in war strategy, rainmaking, or increasing the yield of crops, or warding off specific epidemics, or building up personal prestige, who were ‘fetched’ and sometimes ‘bought’ from other groups by the Dlamini leader of the Swazi, then better known as “People of Ngwane” (Bantu bakaNgwane). These experts became part of the royal circle, married local women, including Dlamini, and transmitted their knowledge to one of their own ‘Swazi’ offspring.

Some of the ingredients and modes of treatment used at the Ncwala of the Swazi were acquired from neighboring political communities, each with its own rituals. Thus certain medicines (imi) used to strengthen the Dlamini leader were learnt from the Mthethwa, one of the most powerful rival kings, and administered by a Mthethwa (which clan name became Mtsetfwa in siSwati), but later, according to leading informants, these medicines were considered to be ‘too strong’ so that they made the king ‘too wild’ (uncontrollable); and in the reign of Somhlolo (the Wonder), Sobhuza I, who took as main wife LaZidze, daughter of Zidze, ruler of the Ndwandwe, Ndwandwe specialists replaced the Mthethwa at the suggestion of LaZidze herself. LaZidze is also said to have composed those of the Ncwala songs which are still sung in the dialect of her people, known as kuyayeza.

Kingship implies different concepts of power and different mechanisms for delegating authority. The Ndwandwe medicine is reputed to have been introduced both to build up the support behind the king and to keep his power (emandla) within the limits of nature. To quote from an interview with one of the men (Sibusiso Motsa) directing the ritual, “The power of Inkosi [the King] must be great, but his anger should rise and subside, rise and subside like waves of the sea.” Ndwandwe priests
have remained in charge of much of the ritual, though the cooperation of the Mthethwa (and others) is still required. In 1966, when I again had the privilege of witnessing the Ncwala, Mandanda Mtsetfwa, almost blind with age, was fetched from the former capital of Zombodze, where he was also the governor, to ‘open’ the first dance-song of the Ncwala and take a leading part in the activities (Kuper 1947a: 60), but the main specialist of the sea and water priests (Belwandle and Bemanti) was Mngwezi Ndwanwe, great, great grandson of Vanyane the original Ndwanwe to perform the rites in Swaziland.

The Relativity of Indigenous Ritual in the Colonial Context

The ritual, which had developed in complexity with changing pre-colonial circumstances, was given a different political emphasis during the colonial period (Kuper 1947a: 218, 224). Colonial rule was originally based on legalized racial discrimination (Kuper 1947b), and though in 1962 discrimination was prohibited by law, it was not automatically eliminated. It remained embodied both in specific laws pertaining to a wide range of situations (land, taxation, marriage, inheritance and succession, employment, licensing, education, *et al.*) and in the total pattern of political, economic and social relationships that had grown up over a period of more than seventy years. Swaziland was an example of a racially based plural society, characterized by differential incorporation (Kuper and Smith 1969), though the domination was paternalist rather than despotic.

British officials, in Swaziland, viewed the Ncwala as a custom that did not threaten their supremacy, nor even challenge their legitimacy. This might have been otherwise in the first years of colonial rule, but, by 1902, when Britain, as ‘victor’ in the Anglo-Boer War (1899-1902), claimed the right to administer the country and people of Swaziland, the military and judicial powers of traditional Swazi rulers had already been curtailed. There had been more than twenty years of tension over concessions and boundaries, indicative of conflicting economic as well as political interests between Boer, British and Swazi. The more effective alliance was between the two rival colonial powers, whose private negotiations culminated in 1894 in a convention to which the Swazi were not a party, granting the Boer Republic of the Transvaal control over Swaziland. When, in 1898, Mahlokohlo of the Dlamini clan, titled by his people *Inkosi* (the King)

1. The people who accompany him include non-Ndwanwe but are described as bakaNdwanwe, because it is the work of the corporate group identified by the Ndwanwe leader.

2. Zulu chiefs in the neighboring territory of Natal had been prohibited (since 1849, when Theophilus Shepstone became authoritarian “diplomatic agent”) from holding “first fruit assemblies” and from summoning the regiments. The Zulu had been defeated in battle; the Swazi by ‘concessions.’ The Zulu nation had developed by warfare; the Swazi by diplomacy as well as conquest.
and Ingwenyama (the Lion), fled from the Boers and sought protection in Zululand, the British arranged with the Boer State President the conditions for his return as ‘paramount chief.’ Mahlokohlo died in 1899, at the beginning of the Anglo-Boer War, and the royal inner council appointed as his main wife Lomawa, daughter of NgoLotsheni Nxumalo, and her son, Mona, as Umtwana (Child of the Nation). Mona was a baby in arms, and until 1922, when he together with his mother were fully installed as Ingwenyama, Sobhuza II, and Indlovukati, La NgoLotsheni, respectively, all affairs of the Swazi were negotiated by the mother of the late Ngwenyama and a senior prince acting as regents.

By Swazi customary law, the full Ncwala, requiring inter alia attendance of regiments in war regalia, could not be performed throughout the entire period of regency; and the power of regents over the regiments was restricted to defense. During that period conflicting claims arising from concessions had also been ‘settled’ by a Proclamation (1907) which reserved one-third of the country, dispersed in thirty-four blocks, for Swazi under communal usage and granted the remaining two-thirds to White concessionaires and to the British Crown. Before the Proclamation was put into effect, all Swazi had been ordered to surrender their guns, and since the strength of Western military technology had been ruthlessly demonstrated in many parts of Africa, the Swazi, on the advice of the regents, did not resist by force, but protested by letters and by deputation.

The year that Sobhuza II was installed as Ingwenyama, he “danced his first incwala;” then, on behalf of Sive (the Swazi Nation), he took a test case against the holders of the Unallotted Land Concession challenging the validity of all the concessions.

I have found no records of the ‘first Ncwala;’ but men who took part, state that Swazi from far beyond the boundaries of modern Swaziland flocked to the capital “to show the strength of kingship.” This was because the boundaries of ‘Swaziland’ had been defined by Boer and British in 1894, and approximately half the population that had been brought into the orbit of influence of the Dlamini leader was left in the Transvaal Republic.

The Ngwenyama Sobhuza II lost the land concession case in both the local court and before the London Privy Council, the highest court of appeal; and the economic, as well as the military and political strength of kingship were increasingly restricted by pressure on the land, the imposition of tax and the introduction of, and desire for new goods. The Swazi were not able to support themselves as subsistence farmers; and some 8,000 men went annually as migrant unskilled workers to mines and farms outside of Swaziland, and thousands of others sought local employment.

Though the Ncwala was performed each year, many Swazi found it too expensive to take part or did not feel it necessary or advantageous to do so. The rulers, operating in a restricted budget, could not supply all who came with enough meat and beer for their needs, and food had
to be bought by many participants, especially those who did not have kin in permanent residence at the capital (Beemer 1937, Kuper 1947b). Apart from the food, the costume itself cost an ordinary unskilled worker nearly a year's wages;1 while but all informants emphatically rejected my suggestion that anyone came to dance Incwala because he might get fed at court or receive any special reward. Attendance does not appear to have varied significantly with the state of the economy, and the African population increased, according to official census, from 153,270 in 1936 to 381,687 in 1966 and the participation fluctuated between only 1,000 to 3,000 (Jones 1968: 8).2

At the same time, irrespective of actual numbers, the ritual enabled representatives of all emabutfo (age-regiments) to assemble in the presence of their leader, Ingwenyama, and so perpetuated a basic multi-functional national structure (Beemer 1937). Though the emabutfo no longer fulfilled their original purpose as fighting units, they continued to perform essential ritual roles in the Ncwala and periodically to provide tribute labor for the rulers.

In the '30's British officials interpreted the Ncwala simply as a First Fruits ceremony and also as a "pageant" (Marwick 1940),3 and they were prepared to legitimate it by their presence. The Resident Commissioner and his wife and a few senior officials formally attended for a short while on the main day, and the Resident Commissioner would walk with the Ngwenyama and his selected entourage along the rows of chanting warriors. The Resident Commissioner would then be led to a section with benches specially placed for non-Swazi spectators and be brought a bowl of "beer from the great hut" (utshwala bendlunkulu). This symbolic participation made it clear to the Swazi that the Government accepted and supported Sobhuza II and no other as paramount chief. After watching 'repetitive dancing' for about an hour, all the administrative officials would leave, and the drama would then develop to its dramatic climax of Swazi identity through kingship.

Objections to Incwala came from non-administrative sources whose interests were more directly affected—European farmers complained that laborers attended the summons of their local chiefs to go to the capital at the time when they were most needed to work in the fields;4 the SPCA

1. In 1935-1940 the total outlay for a full costume might be as much as £25 (some $60). Pay on the mines averaged £2 to £3 per month in cash. The different garments were usually obtained—not always by purchase—over a period of years. The leopard skin worn round the loins was the first requirement of the "pure youths," the capes of tails of cattle were necessary for the older regiments and the feathers for the headdress.

2. These figures of attendance at the Ncwala are estimates derived from discussion with a wide range of people. I myself witnessed the Incwala in 1934, 1935, 1936, 1941, 1967.

3. B. A. Marwick, knighted Sir Brian in June 1963, was a trained anthropologist as well as an administrator.

4. These complaints appeared repeatedly in minutes of the European Advisory Council, and also in reports of meetings of the Swazi National Council.
described the ritual killing of the bull as wanton cruelty and urged that the Government prohibit the entire ritual (Kuper 1947a: 213), and certain missionaries (Anglican, Catholic, and Calvinist) threatened to excommunicate members of their congregation for taking part in ‘heathen customs.’

All these objections were forwarded to the Ngwenyama, who, acting through the Swazi National Council, made the minimum of essential concessions. Chiefs were instructed not to compel their people to attend,¹ the young warriors were ordered to compress the ‘killing the bull’ into the shortest possible time, and missionaries were informed that they too were welcome. ‘Government,’ represented by the Resident Commissioner, did not intervene actively since it did not consider that the Ncwala had any serious political implications. Moreover there was a certain conflict of interest between administrators, farmers and missionaries, with power and authority resting ultimately with the colonial administration.

Since local British administrators treated the Ncwala as a traditional custom of which the major political import was building up the prestige of a ‘paramount chief’ they themselves controlled, they were to some extent willing not only to participate but to cooperate in its proper performance. From 1949 until self-government in 1967, a senior administrative officer accompanied the Ndwandwe priests through the foreign territory of Lourenço Marques, to the secluded resort of Costa do Sol, about half a mile north of Lourenço Marques, and brought them safely back across the border at Namahasha. The reason for this innovation was because Portuguese officials had expressed a suspicion

“that the sea-water priests did not only fetch sea-water from Lourenço Marques but in addition they hunted and killed Shangaans whose bodies they used at the Ncwala ceremony to doctor the Ngwenyama. As this was considered an affront to the Swazi nation and the Swaziland Government in particular, it was decided that a Senior Administrative Officer should always accompany these men so that everything should be above board.”¹

After World War II, written permission was also required from, and given by, the Swaziland Government Secretary for the second group of water priests, individually specified, “to proceed to Komati Poort district [on the eastern border of South Africa] travelling by foot and motor car on behalf of the Paramount Chief of Swaziland for the purpose of drawing river water for ritual Incwala purposes.”

Administrative support of Swazi royal ritual stopped short of significant economic assistance. Requests from the Swazi National Council

¹. At different periods (1950, 1956, and 1958) Government circulars were issued stating that attendance of all young men in the territory not in regular employment was obligatory, but it was not compulsory.

². Letter from S. T. Sukati, Senior Liaison Officer Emeritus (sic), 3 September 1965 to the Accountant General, the Treasury. The first appointee was Pat Forsyth-Thompson (then District Commissioner of Stegi).
for travel expenses and also paid leave for Swazi in Government employ
to attend the Ncwala were refused. The letter quoted above was evoked
when the Central Treasury wanted the travel expenses of its own senior
administrative officer to be borne by the Swazi National Treasury, which
operated on a minimal budget. The Ncwala was not recognized as an
official holiday, though Swazi customary courts were closed for the week
of the Big Ncwala, and officials were expected to attend during their
'leave.'

**Swazi Royal Ritual in a Western Constitutional Context**

Interpreting the Swazi attitude towards participation in the Ncwala,
I had written:

"The Incwala unites the people under the king, and at present there is a fairly
general appreciation of its nationalizing value. 'We see we are all Swazi; we are
joined against outside foes.' I have heard an onlooker [i.e. one who did not take
part in the dancing] rebuked: 'This is a thing of your people. Why abandon us for
Europeans?'" (Kuper 1947a: 224).

Some of the more Westernized non-participant Swazi identified
themselves with those Europeans who labeled the participants disparag-
ingly as 'conservatives' and 'traditionalists,' and dismissed the Ncwala
as pagan or heathen.

Events of World War II strengthened the position of the Ngwenyama
vis-à-vis the British. As head of the emabutfo he had called up specific
regiments to fight on the side of the British under his own appointed
representatives. Moreover he, together with skillful advisers, had
effectively negotiated the Native Authorities Act of 1950, which left him
and the hereditary but lesser chiefs in a more powerful position than leaders
in other comparable territories (Hailey 1953). He had also maintained
and even increased his prestige among the majority of his own people by
voicing their interests to 'Government' and by appointing to new liaison
positions both school-educated and traditional men to represent the
Swazi view. It was largely through his efforts, and supported, *inter alia,*
by a senior local officer, that 316,702 additional acres were acquired for
the Swazi; and this land was used for settlement schemes for Swazi
soldiers returning from World War II.

But by strengthening the traditional structure, and using it to deal
with new situations, the dual system of government and the double
standard of economic development were entrenched rather than eliminat-
ed. As the Swazi system of government became more formalized,
acquiring its own Western educated bureaucrats appointed to run
separate 'native institutions'—including a separate treasury and with
a permanent 'standing committee' to represent the traditional Swazi
National Council, the British administrative structure became more
complex and more specialized along technological lines. Economic development throughout Swaziland had been limited and slow until after World War II, but thereafter it moved rapidly ahead through the introduction, or extension, of vast afforestation projects, irrigation schemes, and mining ventures. However, the benefits of these developments were unevenly distributed; and Whites who, from the concession period, had been protected under colonial legislation as a distinct and privileged elite, increased in prosperity while the Swazi rural economy remained relatively static and the Swazi people correspondingly poor. The general contrast between the standards of living of Whites and Blacks became more obvious, overriding improvement in living conditions of a limited number of individual Africans (Fair, Murdoch and Jones 1969).

Reaction against these conditions, typical of the colonial situation, gave rise in 1959 to the first ‘modern’ political party, the Swaziland Progressive Party, formed significantly enough by a non-Swazi born African John Nquku who had spent most of his life as a teacher and educator of the Swazi. The policy of the SPP was essentially based on a twentieth-century Western democratic and non-racial model. The Ngwenyama, working with the Swazi dogma of kingship, called a meeting of people representing diverse sections of the population and proposed that they form a single government, sharing equally in both responsibilities and benefits. This set in motion the complex chain of actions which concerns us here only insofar as they reveal the controversy centered in different concepts of kingship and the rôle of the Ncwala as a resource of power.\(^1\)

The initial form of government of independent African territories is automatically, as well as deliberately, directed by models developed in metropole. For the British, there is the explicit assumption that traditional monarchies should seek to attain the form of twentieth century England, in which there is a clear distinction between Church and State, and the constitutional sovereign is ‘above politics.’ This model was in many ways incompatible with the Swazi concept of kingship in which sacred and secular powers are fused so that Swazi kingship had an intensely sacramental quality. The powers of the ‘twin rulers,’ though not absolute nor unchecked, were extensive; and institutionalized opposition through political parties was perceived as treason. Once appointed and anointed, the only means whereby either ruler could be ‘unkinged’ was death.

The first attempt to produce a ‘modern constitution,’ that would provide for development and security and involve the diverse elements into a single government, brought into the open tensions underlying opposing views of government and led to long and bitter strife between emerging and competing political parties and personalities. During this

\(^1\) For a fuller account, but different interpretation, of events, see Halpern 1965 and Stevens 1967.
period (1959-1963) attendance at the *Ncwala* was described as very poor, though the *Ngwenyama* sent special representatives to tell chiefs at meetings of local councils (*tinkundla*) that they were required to see that more people in their districts attended.

The decisions of the *Ngwenyama* to maintain his position by entering the arena of modern politics met with considerable criticism from the then Resident Commissioner, Brian Marwick. Voicing the opinions of his closest advisers in the civil service and supported by leaders of different political parties, he argued that a monarch should take no part in politics and that a multi-party system was the safeguard of democratic rights; he stated furthermore that *Ingwenyama*’s actions were slowing down development and had lost him the support of his people. But the *Ngwenyama* countered that an African king rules as well as reigns, that his behavior was in keeping with his position. To prove that he was ‘not alone,’ he insisted on a referendum in spite of non-cooperation by the ‘Government’ and the threat that he personally would be held responsible for any violence. He selected as his symbol the lion, and for those who opposed him, the reindeer (*mpondo-mpondo* “horns-horns”), a foreign animal. “The Lion” received 122,000 votes, “the Reindeer” 154.

The Resident Commissioner had obviously miscalculated; and the British government, finding it impossible, despite lengthy and thorough constitutional talks, to reconcile the divergent viewpoints, imposed its own compromise in a complicated document establishing, *inter alia*, Swaziland’s first Legislative Council (Swaziland Order in Council, 1963).

From the Swazi viewpoint it was generally unsatisfactory. The post of Resident Commissioner was to be up-graded to “Her Majesty’s Commissioner” (the Queen’s Commissioner) with powers equivalent to that of a governor. The “Power and Privileges of the *Ngwenyama*” were restrictively defined, and no real recognition was given to the aspirations of a nation moving towards independence. At the end of the complicated document was a short Schedule 3:

> “Matters Which Shall Continue to be Regulated by Swazi Law and Custom

(a) The office of *Ngwenyama*
(b) The office of *Ndlovukazi* (the Queen Mother)
(c) The appointment, revocation of appointment and suspension of Chiefs
(d) The composition of the Swazi National Council, the appointment and revocation of appointment of members of the Council, and the procedure of the Council
(e) The *Ncwala* Ceremony
(f) The *Libutfo* (regimental) system.”

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The Ncwala together with ‘other matters’ of Swazi law and custom were thus entrenched in legislation which in fact contradicted their ‘customary’ operation.

The initial reaction of the Ngwenyama-in-Council, as well as leaders of the political parties, to the ‘imposed constitution’ was to boycott the election to the Legislative Council. However, aware that to be effective a boycott must be universal, and conscious of the risk of duplicity, the Ngwenyama, in consultation with a wide selection of advisers, formed the Imbokodvo National Movement (INM) which served as the political arm of the traditional Swazi National Council, and entered his own members into the contest. Voting was based on racially defined electoral roles, and the INM diplomatically formed an alliance with the majority group of white settlers, who had organized themselves into the United Swaziland Association (USA). Together they won every seat, but at the opening meeting Prince Makhosini, appointed by the Ngwenyama as leader of INM, asked for a committee to formulate a new constitution more in keeping with Swazi principles and interests. The INM thereby disassociated itself from its embarrassing bond with the more reactionary Whites of the USA and was able to incorporate into its program many points of its former critics. That year (1964), the number and range of participants at the Ncwala showed, according to several informants, a ‘marked increase.’

The committee to draft the new constitution met under the chairmanship of Sir Francis Loyd (the Queen’s Commissioner), who had been sent to replace Sir Brian Marwick, who had been transferred before the elections took place. The proposals for the new constitution contained the following significant statement:

“The fundamental problem with which the Constitutional Committee was concerned was one which has for long been at the root of Swazi constitutional thinking, namely, the restoration of what the Swazis regard as the original treaty relationship which Swaziland had with Britain in the nineteenth century and the recognition of the kingship of the Ngwenyama (Paramount Chief).”

The “original treaty relationship” refers to the Pretoria Convention, 1891, signed by British, Boer, and Swazi, which guaranteed the independence of the Swazi under their own king. To the Swazi this was a binding charter, never legally abrogated, and subsequent proclamations and conventions which denied or ignored Swazi sovereignty were described as breaches of faith, broken promises. Thus the model of precolonial independence of Swazi kingship served as a guide for the theme that the constitution for independent Swaziland “should recognize the Ngwenyama as King of Swaziland and Head of State.” The document also stipulated an interim period of self-government during which

2. Ibid., p. 8.
Government would consist of the king and a bicameral parliament, elected by universal franchise and a common voters roll; but at the same time important powers of external relations, internal defense, and specific rights over employment conditions of civil servants were to be reserved to the Queen's Commissioner. Explicit recognition was again given to the Swazi National Council and "its status and powers relating to Swazi law and custom and the control of Swazi national land;" and the Ncwala and emabufio were mentioned specifically.

THE STRATEGY OF RITUAL

This complex document, published in siSwati and English, was being discussed when I arrived in Swaziland in August 1966 to study the process of adaptation of an African monarchy to recent political innovations. Many of the objections against the 'imposed constitution' of 1963 had been removed, more specifically the Ngwenyama was recognized by Whites as well as Swazi as king of the country, and it had been agreed that all former Crown land as well as Swazi nation land would be transferred to him in trust for the Swazi nation. Only one issue was holding up the final draft, an issue ostensibly centered in control over rights to minerals and mineral oils, but fundamentally revealing the subtle distinction between the British interpretation of the rôle of a king and the Swazi concept of kingship. Approaching the Ngwenyama as a British style constitutional monarch, control over mineral assets could correctly be vested in him, but he would be obliged to act on the advice of the Cabinet representing the elected parliament. But from the traditional Swazi viewpoint, rights over minerals, like rights over land should be vested in the Ngwenyama who would then appoint his own committee independent of Cabinet control and which would allocate revenues it received in accord with what the Ngwenyama-in-Council considered the interest of the nation.

The right to control this source of revenue was clearly a highly controversial issue of major political as well as economic importance in a country recognized as rich in mineral resources. It brought to the fore the dilemma of integrating two political systems based on different attitudes towards the monarchy in a country in which, following the colonial regime, wealth and special technical skills were still largely monopolized by Whites, many of whom were not citizens of Swaziland. The reluctance of the British to accept the Swazi viewpoint was interpreted by Swazi as an indication of a lack of trust in the Ngwenyama as head of a multi-racial State. In principle the British acknowledged the commitment of the Swazi to traditional institutions they considered significant for their future identity as an independent nation, but, as a colonial power, Britain was not able to reconcile these with its own interests or concepts of democracy.
While critics of the Swazi viewpoint considered that Britain was being required to accord recognition to a model of government which had developed over some three hundred years under totally different conditions, Swazi pointed out that the British were applying their own traditional model of government. On several occasions *Ingwenyama* had in fact made it clear that Swazi traditional culture was not static and incapable of change, that in fact it could serve as a guideline in planning the future, not as a fetter that chained people to a past. Indeed, so intelligently had he encouraged and supported technological innovations—such as the introduction of irrigation and extension of electricity—that the Swazi belief in the deep mystic powers of kingship remained unchallenged. Moreover Sobhuza II had been able with some success to use traditional rituals to build up Swazi political resources.

The *Ncwala* of 1966 was a case in point. It fell at a crucial stage in political negotiations between the British government and the Swazi King-in-Council. Bechuanaland and Basutoland, the two other former British High Commission Territories in Southern Africa, had become the independent States of Botswana and Lesotho in September and October 1966 respectively. In many villages in Swaziland I heard lively discussions as to why Swaziland, which for many years would have been the first of the three to be handed over to South Africa, would be the last to get independence (translated as *inkhululekho* “freedom”). After having attended the two independence ceremonies Mr. John Stonehouse, then Britain’s Parliamentary Under-Secretary for the Colonies visited Swaziland for final consultation with local officials and Swazi political leaders and he also met delegations from political parties. But he had not been able to change the Swazi reaction to the issue of control over minerals. When Stonehouse left, Sir Francis Loyd, as Queen’s Commissioner, remained with the task of trying to persuade *Ingwenyama* of the wisdom of the British approach, and of the ‘concessions’ that had been made to Swazi demands in the new constitution.

The *Ngwenyama* was not prepared to discuss matters further. The Secretary of the Swazi National Council, Reverend Sibusiso Motsa, informed the Government, with which he did not identify, that “according to Swazi custom the *Ngwenyama* would be in seclusion¹ and all routine administrative matters would be suspended for the duration of the *Ncwala*. “The duration” extends from the day of the departure by the water priests from the capital, Lobamba, until the burning of the *lusekwane* (the ritual foliage) surrounding the inner sanctuary *inhlambelo* in which the *Ngwenyama* is ‘strengthened.’ According to the written calendar the *Ncwala* of 1966-67 lasted from the 16 November 1966.

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¹ The word used for seclusion is *kufukama*, a term with the following subtly associated meanings: 1) to sit as a hen on eggs, i.e. to brood or hatch; 2) to be confined or secluded (e.g. for childbirth); and 3) to be threatening (e.g. *litfulu lifukeme* “the sky is threatening”). A mechanically oriented informant said, “When *Ngwenyama* is in seclusion he is refueling his power engine.”
until the 23 January 1967. It extended beyond the concentrated core of activities in which Ingwenyama appeared as the central and dominant figure.

The fact that for approximately eight weeks the Ngwenyama would not meet members of the British administration for private discussion created a situation which the Queen's Commissioner told me was "most awkward and inconvenient" and one senior expatriate civil servant criticized as "putting the Ncwala show before the political interests of the country." I do not think they got the unspoken message: seclusion served as exclusion. This was clear enough to Swazi informants: the Ncwala is an act of kingship; it was being used as a strategy in political maneuvers to avoid discussions which were controversial and pointless. The ritual seclusion made it possible to avoid the semblance of collaboration in, and implicit approval of, political decisions which he might at a later date wish to criticize or even repudiate, and the fact that Ingwenyama was throughout that time close to his own advisors and gave audience to personal friends demonstrated his position as upholder of Swazi customs and his identification, not with the colonial government, but with Swazi national aspirations.

At the same time the Ngwenyama made it clear—as he had on many previous occasions and as he has subsequently shown by his political appointments—it was not on a racial basis that he was taking his stand. Immediately after seeing him at his residence, Emasundwini, on 8 December, i.e. during the period of Incwala, I recorded the following as accurately as I could remember in his own words:

The cry of many leaders in troubled countries in Africa was "Get rid of the Europeans; drive them to their own homes; let only Africans remain in Africa." I see no sense in such talk. There are Whites who have been here for generations, and cases where Whites formed firm friendships with Africans, what good is there in chasing away our friends? If the Africans tried to chase all the Europeans from Africa, it would have to be expected that the Europeans would chase out the Africans who lived in their country, and then access to the outside world would be denied to the Africans together with the opportunities such access offered for education and broadening views.

Moreover while he avoided private negotiations with British officials on grounds of Swazi custom, the public appearance of the highest British representative, the Queen's Commissioner, was scheduled, according to precedence, to take place for a brief period on the main day.

The Uniquely Unalterable Core and the Limits of Flexibility

Using the metaphor of drama the Ncwala which I witnessed in 1966 could be described as a new production based on an ancient and sacred script, possessing the quality of 'the uniquely unalterable.' Each major event was still prescribed by the movements of the sun correlated with
the phases of the moon and calculated on the assumption that the world is stationary and there is an observable and predictable order in nature. The departure of the bemanti was in the new moon before the Little Newala (the sacred water must be drawn on the day of the full moon) and the burning of the foliage took place after all the rituals were complete and the old moon was again in darkness and a new moon would grow. Each specific scene had its specific sequence, and the main action again took place at the two royal villages, Lobamba, residence of the Ndlovukati and ritual capital of the Swazi nation, and Lozita, the first independent quarters of the (Umtwana) “Child of the Nation,” her son, the Ngwenyama. The elaborate costumes and unforgettable words, music and movements of the sacred dance songs were unchanged. Specific clans continued to be required to perform important offices, so that though many of the earlier actors had died, their replacements were structurally explicable and very often predictable. Thus the Ndlovukati, Lomawa Nxumalo, who died in 1942 had been replaced by her full sister Nukwase, both belonging to the Ndwandwe clan of Esikhotheni in Southern Swaziland. And when Nukwase died in 1957, her replacement was Sihlati, a senior wife of the Ngwenyama, because she too was an Ndwandwe, albeit of a different branch, the Ndwandwe of Elwandle in Central Swaziland. The ritually requisite clans (Mdluli, Motsa, Matsibula, Ndwandwe, Tfwala, Nkambule, Zwane, etc.) were each represented by selected members of specific lineages, so that though there was a choice, a possibility of alternative individuals, the main scaffolding was reinforced, not eroded, by time. Princes and commoners, organized in well-defined age regiments, queens and princesses, all played stereotyped roles in relationship to the king, the hero, a part played as it had been played since his installation in 1921, by Sobhuza II. I recalled his words, “The Newala is necessary for kingship [bukhosi]. When there is no Inkosi there is no Inewala.”

I wrote in my first study:

“As kingship alters, and has altered, additions and adaptations are, and have been, made to the ritual. [. . . But] Swazi themselves think that the efficiency of the ritual lies in exact repetition, or if change is essential that it is better to add than to discard” (Kuper 1947a: 224).

True, I noted a few minor changes, and one conspicuous innovation, but the minor changes related mainly to organizational modifications reflecting a shift in economic attitudes, and the innovation, as I will show, was an extension not a contradiction of the ritual.¹

The one conspicuous innovation that I noted was on the sixth day,

¹ Three minor changes will serve to illustrate my argument:

¹ Formerly animals required for the ritual could be and were, taken without compensation; in 1966, they were paid for from the Swazi National Treasury or from the Lifá (Inheritance Fund), a special fund originally established to buy back land for the Swazi nation. However, I was told that the owner could not refuse, even though he might not want to sell, because of the continuing principle that “every animal belongs to kingship” (note “to kingship” not “to the king”).
the day of the sacrificial fire: two priests of a separatist “Church of Zion,”
wear the white robes of Emzioni ("Zionists") 'planted' in front of the
nhlambelo (sanctuary) a shining silver rod or wand. The history of this rod
illuminates the extent of flexibility in ritual and in participation.
The rod had been 'dreamed of' by Stephen Mavimbela, an important
person in the inner circle of the late queen mother, Nukwase. In the
dream 'the Holy Spirit' said he should draw it and take the drawing
to a European craftsman in Johannesburg to copy 'in silver' so that it
would be Umlamuli (the Saviour or Protector), a 'Moses Rod' for the
Swazi. Stephen Mavimbela, who died in 1949, had wanted the rod to go
to Sobhuza, but it was reported to me by Samuel Matunywa, one of his
disciples, that the king had said, "No! Let it stay until it is needed,"
and placed it in his care. The first time the rod had been used was
during World War II, "when aeroplanes came over Swaziland." It was
then not placed inside the cattle byre but raised in both hands by
Mavimbela; it was used again in 1963, when the political parties "made
their trouble and disobeyed the king." And from that year the silver
rod was placed in the cattle byre of the capital on the day that the
'things of the past' were burnt as an offering (umnikelo). Matunywa
said the purpose of the rod was "to make the world stand" (kumis
mhlaba, i.e. "be stable") and "to keep peace." The power was not in the
rod itself: "It is [a symbol of] remembering that we must ask the help
of God." Again, on Independence Day, 6 September 1968, Elijah,
son of Samuel Matunywa and a fellow Zionist, brought the wand to the
stadium and dug it into the ground near the dais on which the king stood
to take the march past of all his people. The introduction of the wand
did not disturb the 'uniquely unalterable' core of Swazi ritual, and for
the people who introduced it into different situations it marked their
support of kingship.

Informants could not give the exact year in which payment started, but it appears
to have resulted from complaints of "theft" made to officials of the colonial
government.

2) The second example of "plus ça change plus c'est la même chose" is the
way in which the Water People collected the contributions, or fines, from members
of the public who crossed their path. Though they had never been entitled to
make any exorbitant demands—the contributions were always supposed to be
essentially symbolic. I noted that in 1966 the leaders were very circumspect in
whom they accosted, moreover special men had been appointed by the Swazi
National Council to arrange for their subsistence and accommodation at selected
villages instead of relying on the hospitality of their hosts. However, they were
still conspicuous by their headgear, their badge of office, and behaved "with studied
arrogance," expecting and receiving respect (Kuper 1947a: 200).

3) The following trifle illustrates change brought about by age—it does not
alter the timeless of ritual. I had written that the youths arriving before dawn
at Lobamba with their sacred lusekwane were greeted by the Ngwenyama. In 1966,
I noticed that a few selected men deputized for him. But on the Great Day,
the Ngwenyama's unique and exacting rôle began before dawn and ended after
the sun had set. Discussing the apparent discrepancy, one of the princes explained
simply, "He is older now"—to greet the warriors before was a personal inclination,
the other performances were ritually prescribed.
I have already implied that the number and in particular the range of participants can to some extent serve as an index of support not of the ritual, but of the kingship and the king. The Newala of 1966-67 drew a larger and more enthusiastic attendance than any Incwala which I had previously attended. On the main day, I estimated that there were at least 3500 participants and over a hundred spectators. The participants were drawn from a wider range than formerly. Until the early '60's very few teachers, converts or civil servants took part in the dancing and singing, or dressed in Incwala costume. The ethnocentric denigration of their cultural heritage had been carried through Catholic, Anglican, and Calvinist mission schools and symbolized in Western clothing, and to discard this clothing was treated as open rejection of the church and a return to 'heathendom.' With years of secular contacts, mainly through employment, Western clothing no longer distinguished the emakhholwe ("believers," i.e. Christians), and a new derogatory term, imincugula, had been coined for men who "wore trousers and had no religion." It was primarily those who had attended national non-mission schools, started initially by the Ndlovukati Gwamile grandmother of Sobhuza, who had conspicuously supported Swazi customs. But in 1966-67 participants in Incwala clothing included many of the 'new elite,' men holding, or designated for, important positions in the future government. Most had 'joined in the dancing' only in the past three years (i.e. since the referendum and the success of INM); there had been no mass conversion or fiat from the Ngwenyama but individuals made their own decisions in terms of their own values and interests. Among the dancers were prominent members of the Legislative Council who had been educated at mission schools, as well as members of opposition parties who had later joined the 'king's party.' They took their place beside the ordinary Swazi citizen in the traditional age-regiments. Swazi confirm my own impression that conventional missions (Catholic, Anglican, and Calvinist) had found it expedient to stop labelling all non-Western customs and organizations as 'pagan' or 'heathen,' and excommunicaing or even condemning those who 'danced' or wore 'Swazi dress.'

Seven priests of three Zionist sects were conspicuous participants. They were separate from the warriors in Incwala clothing and danced facing them, to the south of the sacred enclosure into which the Ngwenyama and his priests periodically retired. This is not the place to elaborate on the relationship of the Swazi rulers to different churches, and it must suffice to state simply that male rulers since the reign of Mswati have tolerated all churches while belonging to none in particular and queen mothers have been directly involved in membership. Their longest and closest association has been with independent African
churches—the ‘Zionists’ and African Methodist Episcopalian (AME) to which the majority of Swazi converts belong. There are many ties between the present Ingwenyama and the independent churches through both maternal and affinal relationships and through key officials, and leaders of independent churches have on several occasions appealed to him to arbitrate on internal succession disputes.

The leadership of ‘Zionist’ churches is generally more oriented to African custom than the ‘Ethiopian-type’ churches of which the AME is the most influential; and no minister of the AME took part in the dancing, though one important ordained AME minister had an important rôle to play in the more sacred rites.

At the same time, participation by churchmen does not transform the Ncwala into a church occasion; the allegiance of many converts is specifically demonstrated on Igoodi (Good Friday) when different denominations gather at the ritual capital of Lobamba, and sing and pray for the rulers and the country. This ritual was inaugurated by the same Mavimbela who introduced the ‘rod.’

1. Sobhuza II’s maternal grandfather, Elijah Nxumalo, was the first Swazi Methodist minister. Elijah’s eldest son (the late), Benjamin, who was one of Sobhuza’s closest advisers, was very active in the separatist African Methodist Episcopal Church which he represented at a conference in America in 1942; he was also a founder, in 1929, of the Swaziland Progressive Association, which developed into the first political party in 1959. Other relatives of Swazi rulers were among the early converts to ‘Zionist’ sects. One of the more important was Ladluli, sister of the Ndlovukati Gwamille, and as such considered wife of the Ingwenyama Mbandzeni, Sobhuza’s grandfather. Johanna Nxumalo, a full sister of the queen mother Lomawa, was a convert of Daniel Nkonyane, and went to live and preach at his Charlestown center in Zululand. Daniel Nkonyane frequently visited Swaziland and is said to have cured Lomawa of various ailments (Sundkler 1961: 315-319). When Daniel died, in 1935, his son Stephen was called to succeed to the leadership and was invited by Sobhuza to attend the Ncwala, which he did for the first time in 1938. Reverend Stephen Nkonyane subsequently took as one of his wives Sobhuza’s daughter, Princess Thembi.

In 1939 Sobhuza had called to his residence leaders of the independent churches, and on his suggestion they had founded a National Swazi Church with a flexible dogma and tolerance of different customs. The Ndlovukati Nkwase, who had been “a dressed member” of the AME, had to abandon the clothing of church identification before she could be appointed successor to Lomawa (who died in 1942), but she retained her close relationship with fellow congregants and extended her patronage to all religious groups. In 1944 the National Swazi Church changed its name to the United Church of Africa. Mavimbela also played an important rôle in this development.

At least three branches stemming from the original Nkonyane have been active in building up an extensive membership which supports the Swazi monarchy. Among them was Stephen Mavimbela, who came from a family famous for its diviners; it was he who dreamed of the magic wand. One of his sons is a member of Parliament.

2. This was Sibusiso Motsa, who had spent seven years studying in America; his rôle in the Ncwala was because he was a son of the late Ngolotsheni Motsa insila (ritual blood brother) of Sobhuza (Kuper 1947a). Reverend Motsa also held the important political position of Secretary of the Swazi National Council; and he is but one example of the overlap and at time contradiction in rôles of key individuals. Up to the present, Reverend Sibusiso has not worn Swazi-style clothing; his concession to Swazi ritual is to go barefoot when performing his duties as son of an insila.

3. The Ncwala is sometimes described as “the Christmas of the Swazi.”
Since in Swazi tradition, there is no division between Church and State, both being combined in kingship, the fact that Sobhuza II did not convert to any specific church strengthens his position as priest-king of the nation. The traditional ritual of appeal through the ancestors to the High God is not a proselytizing religion, and while each family head appeals through his ancestors on behalf of his dependents, the Ngwenyama appeals through past rulers on behalf of all the nation. Thus theoretically he is able to represent all sections including separate congregations who come to the Ncwala. But not all sections recognize him in this capacity and ritual resources are not a substitute for economic goods.

There is even one small group of 'Zionists,' known as 'the Red,' because members wear red not white uniforme, whose members take no part in the Ncwala or Igoodi.

Of the spectators, roughly fifty were Whites and the rest were Africans in Western clothes. The most important guest was the Queen's Commissioner. Following the patterns of behavior set by a long line of Resident Commissioners, Sir Francis and Lady Loyd were officially welcomed by the Ndlolvukati and by the Ngwenyama. Then the two men, one resplendent in Incwala costume and the other in the costume of the Order of Saint George walked, chatting, and smiling cordially past the rows of chanting warriors. Sir Francis was then escorted to a sheltered stand erected for the occasion, where he joined his wife and other spectators. These included senior administrators (two of whom were Swazi), dressed in white duck suits and helmets; White members of the Legislative Council and several local businessmen; most of the Whites were tourists armed with cameras. A large bowl of Swazi beer was sent from the great hut for the VIP's who drank from it with different degrees of appreciation. The Ngwenyama in the meantime had rejoined the dancers and did not again interrupt his role in the ritual, but after about an hour his representatives escorted the Queen's Commissioner to his car. Thereafter the other guests were asked to leave. Only 'true Swazi' remained singing and miming the drama of kingship.

Ten Whites stayed among the participants; and none of them were major figures in politics, industry, or religion. They included a family of five (a husband, wife, young son, and two teenage daughters), three British IVS teachers, and my own teenage daughter, all in Incwala clothing. I was the only White who danced in Western clothes, and for the first time my own clothing had been made an issue.1

The African spectators in Western clothing included Swazi from different parts of Swaziland, some of whom had never before seen the

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Newala, and indeed had never been to the capital; Swazi from the Republic, who had come ‘to pay respects,’ of whom a few were from important families wanting to return to the ‘homeland,’ and several non-Swazi Africans already living and working in Swaziland. It was not possible for me to obtain figures on the numbers in each of these categories, and responses to the ritual varied from “I would like to join” to “I would refuse unless forced to take part.”

When the Newala was over, the participants were able to devote themselves to urgent and mundane political activities. The election was less than three months away and five political parties entered candidates. Since voting was no longer on racial rolls, the INM needed no diplomatic party alliances and no White candidates to defeat the opposition. Despite the fact that the anti-INM vote increased, from 14% in 1964 to 22% in 1967, the INM was able to fill every one of the twenty-four seats in Swaziland’s first Parliament.

Addressing a crowd estimated at some 20,000 at the ceremony in which he was officially sworn in as “king of Swaziland,” Ngwenyama said:

“It is the tradition of all African kingdoms that their kings are leaders as well as kings. This is also true for Swaziland. Now, rightly or wrongly, some people have mistaken this dual capacity for a dictatorship. I would like to assure you here and now that in our kingdom the king both leads and is led by his people. I am my people’s mouthpiece.”

On the basis of a general election, Swaziland had become a one-party state led by a hereditary monarch, who, in addition to the twenty-four elected members of the party-movement he initiated, was also constitutionally granted authority to nominate six members to the House of Assembly and six to the Senate. These were to represent special interests and the choice he made was six Whites, one of whom was given the important office of Minister of Finance; one European; a successful Swazi businessman; an outstanding Swazi woman; a Swazi lawyer; a Swazi minister and educationalist; and a retired Swazi rural development officer.

The Prime Minister was, of course, the loyal Prince Makhosini, nominal leader of the party in power.

The Limits of Ritual as a Political Resource

Independence had been promised “not later than 1969” but at the opening session of Parliament Prince Makhosini pressed for earlier independence, and as a result, the liminal period of ‘responsible govern-

2. Two short biographies of all the first members of Parliament appear in Ndwandwe [n.d.].
ment’ lasted only seventeen months (24 April 1967 - 8 September 1968). In that time, however, the Ngwenyama-in-Council had managed to persuade the British to change the clause relating to rights over minerals and mineral oils; and the final constitution of independent Swaziland, provided that they be vested in the Ngwenyama, in trust for the Swazi nation, advised by a committee appointed not by Parliament but by him after consultation with the Swazi National Council.

On 6 September 1968, Sobhuza II was recognized as sole sovereign of Swaziland. The ‘instruments of independence’ were handed to him in a spectacular celebration described by the British as ‘granting independence,’ and by the Swazi as ‘reacquiring independence.’

Sobhuza as the Ngwenyama together with his supporters conveyed this message in the graphic language of costume, song, and dance as well as in more direct speech. The Ngwenyama, the Ndlovukati, emakhosikati (queens), most Swazi notables, and some 2,000 emabutfo appeared in full Incwala costume. After the main speeches, the emabutfo began nqaba kangošiša, a traditional dance-song commemorating a victory and performed only at major national occasions, including the Ncwala (Matsebula 1967). The Ngwenyama and Prince Makhosini left their seats in the grandstand between the representatives of the British to join the regiments. Ingwenyama took his place in the center, the Balondolozi, and the Prime Minister, who is fifteen years younger, joined his own peers, the Ema-Sotosha. This spontaneous, unrehearsed action evoked immense enthusiasm and excitement. It was my first experience of the meaning of ‘social euphoria.’ But how long can euphoria last?

Immediately after independence, the new Kingdom of Swaziland became the 28th member of the British Commonwealth, the 40th member of the OAU and the 120th member of the United Nations. Swazi kingship symbolized in ritual and clothing had been reestablished in a governmental system based on a different economic infrastructure and different principles of organization from that of either the precolonial or colonial period. But the new Kingdom of Swaziland remained like its colonial prototype geographically encapsulated by the Republic of South Africa and, to the east, by the Portuguese Province of Mozambique. And the Swazi Government faced the problem of uniting a racially and culturally heterogeneous population among whom economic resources were unevenly distributed with major developments concentrated in areas of non-Swazi (i.e. White and foreign) enterprises.

1. A full analysis of the entire independence ceremony will be published separately.
2. The total population, according to the detailed 1966 Census numbered 395,264 people of whom Africans numbered 361,667 (of whom over 90%, were born in Swaziland, most of the rest were from South Africa and Portuguese territory) and Whites 9,176, the majority being South African or British born. Whites owned approximately 40% of the land under freehold tenure, and some 76% of all Whites lived in the developing urban areas; Swazi had rights in Swazi nation land, covering approximately 52% of the country; and 17% of all Africans lived in urban areas.
It is a truism that the future of a country depends on its leadership and in a monarchy, the position of the king is obviously crucial. Sobhuza II holds at least four difficult and distinct positions: firstly, he is Head of State, that is of Swaziland as a territorial entity, with a non-homogeneous population; secondly, he is trustee of Swazi nation land and controller of mineral revenue in an economy dependent on foreign investment; thirdly, he is recognized founder of the political party in power; and finally, he remains Ingwenyama, priest-king of the Swazi in a country of competing religions. These positions are reconcilable because of the support given the present king who has emerged as a major statesman in the arena of modern politics. Despite historical events and contact with other forms of government, “the king” rather than “the kingship” has become hedged with divinity—a process, the reverse of the ‘routinization of charisma’—a hereditary monarch appears to have successfully embellished a declining office by the charisma of his personality. But what of the future?

To try to answer this would take me too far from the central theme of this paper—the way in which a royal ritual conveying a complex set of ideas about ‘kingship’ is used for political purposes over a period of historic time. Probably in all modern countries, deliberate attempts are made to stimulate patriotism and develop a sense of unity through the use of slogans, rites, flags, ceremonies, rituals, but rituals such as the Ncwala are more deeply rooted than contrived political propaganda and express more fundamental and enduring beliefs.

Conclusion

The ideological monism of the preindependence period in which royal rulers acted as the nexus between the highest spiritual beings and the lowest subject was broken by the beliefs and institutions introduced in the colonial era. More specifically, Western officials drew a new distinction between the natural and the spiritual worlds and separated secular and sacred authority. A British sovereign could not be approached through African ancestors and the dichotomy of dynasties paralleled the dichotomy of political institutions. Throughout the constitutional discussions towards postcolonial independence there was the contrast between Swazi concepts of kingship and a Western model of parliamentary representation. The continuity of the Swazi concept of kingship persisted and was expressed most elaborately in the Ncwala.

At the same time, I have tried to show that despite its ‘uniquely unalterable’ core—the symbolic constant of a sacred text-in-action, there are different political implications between the Ncwala during the precolonial period, the Ncwala at different stages of colonial rule, and the Ncwala of a self-governing and independent kingdom. In the precolonial period of independent Swazi kings, when both inclusion and exclusion
into the nation were more prescribed and controlled, participation in the *Newala* was coextensive with the polity; in the colonial period, participation was more limited and served indirectly as one manifestation of non-acceptance of legalized subordination and inferiority. A ritual which had previously united a nation, became a symbol of political and cultural differentiation. With the approach of self-government, preliminary to independence, the *Newala* was used as a focus of an intensified Swazi nationalism. In the present period of independence, participation in the *Newala* is more extensive, but with the economic and political diversity and complexity of a modern State it is no longer possible for a single ritual to symbolize the totality. The *Newala* has been pronounced a public holiday and the official calendar has been reorganized so that civil servants can participate without loss of pay and students without missing school, but this does not make the *Newala* more important than other public holidays, nor make it essential for all Swazi, let alone non-Swazi, to participate.

I would predict that as long as the myth of Swazi kingship retains a political hold over Swazi, this will be ritualized in the *Newala*; if the myth is destroyed and Swazi kingship ends or is made subordinate to other myths (e.g. Western democracy) with different loyalties and interests, the *Newala* will lose its ritual as well as its political meaning. The dances, songs and costumes may then remain as masterpieces of art in what could become a ‘pageant’ of Swazi history. For ritual is more than art and pageantry; it speaks through involvement, as the Swazi say “*Incwala iyagidwva, ayibukelwa,*” “the *Newala* is danced not watched.” Everyone present should participate, no one should leave in the middle and no one may object to the subject matter. There is no passive audience, only active participants, and incorrect performance of the rites is believed to bring mystical retribution. The motives for participation may vary and are irrelevant unless or until they are openly expressed. There are some at the present time who doubt the power of the ritual but dare not openly say so, and who participate for pragmatic reasons—their participation in the ritual is backed by the mundane sanction of fear of exclusion from political office in a modern country where a priest-king is still able to influence secular appointments.

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