

THE ROYAL EASTER RITUAL
AND
POLITICAL ACTIONS IN SWAZILAND
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THE ROYAL EASTER RITUAL AND POLITICAL ACTIONS IN SWAZILAND

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ABSTRACT

The Royal Easter Ritual and Political Actions in Swaziland

This work focuses on the meaning and role of the royal Easter ritual in post-colonial Swaziland (1968-1992). I pay special attention to the relationship between the royal Easter ritual and political actions undertaken by many Swazi urban commoners who oppose the current absolute rule of the monarchy in modern Swazi society.

The thesis of this study is two-fold. First, I interpret the royal Easter ritual as an invented tradition which reinforces the continuing conflict between the monarchy and many urban commoners in post-colonial Swaziland. The second contention is that this new royal tradition has been consistently resisted by most mission Christians through symbolic, covert social actions which include non-participation in the ceremony, and polemical discourses. I argue that this covert contestation of the new royal tradition by most mission Christians is concurrent with other subtle as well as overt political actions pursued by many urban commoners who are opposed to the absolute rule of the monarchy in post-colonial Swaziland.

This work makes a significant contribution to scholarship on the role of religion and royal rituals in Swazi society. In contrast to existing works on the royal Easter ritual which over-emphasize the integrative role of the ritual, this

study demonstrates the inadvertent, dysfunctional role of this ritual in exacerbating the polarization between the monarchy and many urban commoners in contemporary Swazi society.

In addition, this work constitutes a peculiar, yet familiar case study which reflects the key themes in current anthropological and interdisciplinary studies of ritual and religion, namely: divine kingship, the global process of the invention of tradition, resistance to political domination through religious symbols, and the politics of mission churches.

PREFACE

Popularly known in Swazi society as "Good Friday", the royal Easter ritual is a new royal ceremony in which Swazi Christians - primarily those belonging to the Swazi Independent Churches - gather at the capital royal villages of Lobamba and Lozitha to commemorate the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ together with the Indlovukati or the queen mother and the Ingwenyama or the king.

My participation in this Christian ceremony in April 1992, was prefaced by my participation in the Incwala ceremony, the sacred indigenous ritual of Swazi kingship which takes place during the months of December and January. While I initially participated in the Incwala ceremony in my capacity as a bona fide Swazi citizen, during the course of the ceremony I was inducted - together with three other Swazi - into the Balondolozi regiment, one of the regimental groups which constitute the Emabutfo or the national regiments whose commander-in-chief is the king. However, I did make it clear to my instructors in my regimental group that the main motive for participating in the ritual was academic research for the purpose of writing and teaching about indigenous Swazi religion.

My induction and participation in the long and demanding Incwala ceremony afforded me the privilege to interact with a wide range of participants.

Hence I was able to learn and discern the basic values, beliefs, and concerns which motivated many of my fellow participants. In addition, my full participation in the Incwala - attired in indigenous costume which included antelope skins, cow tails, and woven cloth - also afforded me the opportunity to initiate informal interviews with many urban commoners who abstained from the Incwala ritual on account of personal, religious, or political reasons.

Yet, in view of the sensitive nature of political dissent in Swaziland, and in keeping with the ethical standards governing this form of research, the identities of my informants will remain confidential. Similarly, I cannot reveal the names of the Swazi church leaders and the laity whom I interviewed regarding the history of their own participation in both the Incwala ceremony and the royal Easter ritual.

Although my participation in the royal Easter ritual of April 1992 constituted the most significant method of data collection, additional primary sources on the Swazi royal Easter ritual were obtained through tape recorded transcripts of earlier proceedings of the royal Easter ceremonies. However, since the main language used at the royal Easter ceremony during my field research was SiSwati, my native language, the quotations cited in this study represent my own English translations of the original vernacular texts.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The Royal Easter Ritual

This study will focus on the royal Easter ritual in the modern Kingdom of Swaziland, and will interpret this ritual as an invented tradition which has been resisted by many Swazi commoners through covert symbolic actions and discourses. I will relate these subtle forms of resistance to overt political actions which are undertaken by many urban Swazi commoners in an attempt to challenge the authority of the monarchy in post-colonial Swaziland (1968-1992). This analysis will demonstrate the dialectic between the royal Easter ritual as an invented tradition and current political actions aimed at structural changes in the Swazi political system.

The royal Easter Ritual is one of the main royal ceremonies in post-Independence Swaziland. It is a new royal ceremony in which Swazi Christians - predominantly those belonging to Swazi Independent Churches - converge at the queen mother's residence to celebrate the Easter festival with the Swazi royal family. Swazi Independent Churches represent an eclectic group of African Christian churches which were founded and run by Africans themselves, as opposed to mission churches which were under the control and supervision of European or American missionaries.

The royal Easter ritual was formally established during the colonial era by the Swazi Independent Churches in consultation with King Sobhuza II (Sundkler 1976)¹. As a result, ritual activities at this ceremony centre around the queen mother and the king. These ritual performances include: prayer sessions at the queen mother's and the king's residences; and preaching, singing and dancing on Good Friday and on Easter Sunday in the presence of the king, the queen mother, queens and other senior members of the royal house, Cabinet ministers and other government officials. Indeed, the royal Easter ritual has always been attended by the Swazi dual monarchs, namely the king and the queen mother.

Thus during the entire Easter ritual, the active participation of the Swazi royalty marks the climax of each day's performances. Invariably the king or the queen mother - the dual Heads of State - makes a speech in which particular religio-political values are commended; and these speeches are broadcast on the local radio station and television. In fact, more recently, the king, the queen mother and the queens play a more active part in the singing and dancing - and this gesture is normally well received by the ritual participants.

The royal Easter ritual, then, depicts the Swazi dual monarchs as patrons of the Christian faith - and hence the sacredness of Swazi kingship is re-affirmed (Sundkler 1976; Fogelqvist 1986). For anthropologist Hilda Kuper,

the ritual symbolizes, among other things, harmonious relationships between the church and state in the modern Kingdom of Swaziland (1986a).

However, participation in the Easter ritual on the part of Swazi Christians belonging to mission churches is minimal. Many of these Christians perceive the Easter ritual as an annual convention for the Swazi Independent Churches, and they feel alienated by the form and content of the ritual. Whenever mission church members participate in this ritual they do so on their own terms, that is, with the explicit aim of expounding 'the truth' of the gospel (cf. Samketi 1975:105-6). In fact many Swazi commoners belonging to mission churches neither participate in the annual kingship ritual nor in the national Easter ritual (Fogelqvist 1986:33).

Therefore, the Swazi Easter ritual has had an ambiguous role; both acting to integrate and to exclude some Swazi. This ambivalent impact of the Easter ritual on Swazi society constitutes the research problem of this study. I will show that the main religious ideology of the Easter ritual is contested and resisted not only during the ceremony itself but also through pastoral teachings and political actions outside the ritual context. I will also demonstrate the wider dimension of this cultural dialectic, which takes the form of tensions between primordial sentiments and civil values, and between the monarchy and the commoners in Swazi society.

The Kingdom of Swaziland

Swaziland is an internationally recognized sovereign state which regained its independence from British colonial rule in 1968. With an estimated de jure population of 712,131 persons (1986), and covering a surface area of 17,364 square kilometres, Swaziland is one of the smallest countries of the world. It is also a land-locked country, sharing most of its borders (north, west, and south) with the Republic of South Africa and the eastern borders with the Republic of Mozambique.

I. The Pre-colonial Swazi State

The Swazi are part of the large Bantu-speaking population of southern Africa, and their culture is by and large a synthesis of two cultural variants of the Bantu Family, namely, the Nguni and Sotho traditions (Kuper 1986b)². Pre-colonial Swazi were mainly cattle breeders and horticulturalists, and they developed elaborate, centralized social, economic, and political institutions characterized by kingship, a tributary mode of production, polygyny, and patrilineal descent (Kuper 1986b; Bonner 1980).

The Swazi state was established in the early nineteenth century by the Dlamini royal clan led by Sobhuza I, also known as Somhlolo. The Dlamini, a Nguni clan, migrated from the present-day Republic of Mozambique to Swaziland, conquering and incorporating some of the hitherto semi-autonomous

clans (Emakhandzambili - "those found ahead") many of whom were of Zulu and Sotho ancestry (Bonner 1983). This encounter and interaction with other Bantu-speaking peoples laid the foundation for the development of a distinctive political system characterized by the dual monarchy (twin rulers: a hereditary king and his mother or if dead, one of his senior wives); the libandla, a national council representing various interest groups; and the Incwala, an annual ceremony of the first fruits, which took place at the royal court (Bonner 1983:29).

However, it was not until the reign of Mswati II (1839-1865) - after whom the Swazi state was named - that the Kingdom of Swaziland established itself as a formidable state and the "clans found ahead" were decisively brought under the political and economic control of the Dlamini dynasty. Indeed it was during Mswati's reign that social differentiation crystallized into two main social classes, the aristocrats and the commoners, and this social distinction was maintained largely through the centralized distribution of land, tribute labour, arranged marriages, and the claim of ritual supremacy (Bonner 1979: 61-74; 1980:86-97).

King Mswati II is renowned in Swazi history as "the fighting king" who widened the political domain of nineteenth century Swaziland through military expeditions (Kuper 1947a). The pre-colonial government consolidated by King Mswati II was a dual monarchy in which the king and the queen mother

shared administrative duties (Parsons 1983:137). However, the queen mother - Indlovukati or "she elephant" - specialized mainly in national rituals and her residence constituted the capital of the nation (Kuper 1947a). The king - Ingwenyama or "the lion" - on the other hand, was the chief administrator of the Swazi nation. By tradition, he was expected to be modest, benevolent, and impartial in his administration. The office of the Indlovukati, on the other hand, checked the possible abuse of power by the king (Kuper 1947a).

To quell political dissent as well as to foster national security and solidarity, Mswati II introduced a number of administrative measures. First, he introduced the system of age-regiments that cut across clan, rank and geographical loyalties. This major reform was accompanied by military conscription to ensure the continued presence of a standing army at the Swazi capital, that is, the royal court (Kuper 1947a). In peaceful times the army performed domestic chores such as tilling the king's fields, building royal houses, and hunting. Some Swazi even lived in the Swazi capital permanently, especially slaves and prisoners of war (Kuper 1947a ; Bonner 1979).

The second administrative reform involved the establishment of royal villages in strategic posts across the country, with each village manned by a loyal hereditary chief and a queen. The chief was the king's representative entrusted with executive functions, including land allocation, mobilizing tribute labour, and arbitration (Kuper 1986a).

In fact, the political power of the pre-colonial state was rooted in its control over the allocation of land (Viecelli 1982). According to the Swazi system of land tenure, no subject had full exclusive rights over any piece of land. The land was bestowed on the king as trustee for the nation (Kuper 1986b). Indeed what distinguished the Swazi aristocrats (kings, senior princes, and chiefs) as a distinct social class was their control over land distribution (Bonner 1980); and this social differentiation between commoners and aristocrats was backed by traditional norms which stipulated that privilege and social obligations were determined by birth and sex (Kuper 1947a).

The third reform had to do with people's participation in government. Mswati consolidated the National Council or libandla. The libandla consisted of all Swazi males and its task was to advise the king as well as to serve as a national legislative body. As an administrative measure, this council was specifically instituted to contain the problem of rebellious and rival chiefdoms - those chiefdoms which had existed prior to the advent of the Dlamini aristocracy (Bonner 1980; Crush 1987). In addition to the National Council, however, Mswati established a senior inner council, the Ligogo, comprising senior princes, chiefs, and co-opted prominent commoners which actually governed the country on a daily basis (Kuper 1947a).

The fourth reform centred around the Incwala. This annual harvest festival was modified to express and highlight the legitimacy of the monarchy as

well as to affirm its ritual superiority vis-a-vis other indigenous clans and chiefdoms which asserted their ritual autonomy (Bonner 1983:87). Indeed the Incwala commemorated the founding fathers of the Swazi state, and some of the sacred songs of the Incwala recount the history and exploits of Swazi kings. Such a history is then taken to be the history of the Swazi nation (Kuper 1947a:8). Participation at the Incwala ceremony was made obligatory on the part of all Swazi males, and both aristocrats and commoners were allocated distinctive roles to play in the ritual - thus dramatizing the balance of power between the ruling class and the commoners (Kuper 1947a).

However, King Mswati's administrative reforms were not only designed to resolve internal social conflicts but also to foster a sense of national unity against external enemies, especially the Zulu kingdom. The relations between the Swazi aristocracy and their Zulu counterparts had never been easy. In spite of attempts by Swazi rulers to establish diplomatic relations with the Zulu through arranged marriages (Kuper 1947b:13), by the time of King Mswati the Zulu had invaded Swaziland twice, and the Swazi were forced to pay tribute to the Zulu from time to time (Bonner 1983:37).

Thus King Mswati and previous Swazi leaders frequently entered into alliances with the Boers (Afrikaans-speaking white settlers) and missionaries to counteract Zulu political domination (Bonner 1983; Crush 1987). These political alliances were rationalized by reference to King Somhlolo's dream or vision in

which he was enjoined to welcome European missionaries and also cautioned against resisting colonial domination through violence (Kuper 1978a; Bonner 1983). The first European missionaries, for example, were invited to the country by King Somhlolo, mainly to be used as political allies against the powerful Zulu nation (Bonner 1983).

But this encounter with Europeans later turned out to be problematic for the Swazi ruling class since its political power was severely undermined by the institutionalisation of some Western norms and values by white settlers, the British colonial state, and the missionary churches in Swaziland.

The Swazi polity consolidated by Mswati II, then, has persisted up to this day, albeit in modified forms (Kuper 1978a). Yet for some Swazi, social change has provided an opportunity to escape specific socio-cultural constraints such as tribute labour, limitations on social mobility, and patrilineal marital relations (Kuper 1947b; Crush 1987).

II. Colonial Rule and the Swazi Response

Unlike other indigenous South African kingdoms which were decisively colonized through the military might of British and Boer soldiers, the Swazi state was defeated through a series of land concessions made by Swazi kings to the Boer Republic of Transvaal in return for military support (Bonner 1983; Crush 1987). Following the discovery of diamonds (1870) and gold (1885) in the Boer Republics of Orange Free State and the Transvaal, more land deals

were made with different interest groups such as mining prospectors, traders, farmers and missionaries in exchange for novel commodities such as rifles, cash, linen, horses, and bottled liquor (Kuper 1978a).

Mistaking concessions for temporary leases, Swazi kings gave away most of their land; and by 1875 Swaziland was a virtual Boer colony. Indeed it was not long before Britain and the Boers legally declared Swaziland a Boer protectorate in 1894, and one of the implications of this move was that the Swazi were to be governed by the Transvaal statutes which legislated racial discrimination against Africans. This factor was an added advantage to many Boer farmers in Swaziland who generally treated the Swazi with contempt, including chiefs and the king (Kuper 1978a:24).

But following the victory of the British in the Anglo-Boer War of 1899-1902, the British claimed and assumed political control over Swaziland in 1903. The change in colonial administration, however did not affect the land deals and the status and privileges of white settlers. According to the Land Proclamation Act of 1907, Britain ratified earlier land concessions, thereby legislating that the Swazi would occupy about 37% of their native land, the remainder being shared by white settlers and the colonial government. Most importantly, by the General Law and Administration Proclamation No.4 of 1907, the Roman-Dutch common law and the Transvaal statutes became the general criminal law of Swaziland from 1907 to 1961 (Beardsely et. al. 1991:vi).

These two proclamations have had far-reaching consequences for the social structure of the Kingdom of Swaziland. These Acts laid the legal framework for the establishment of a plural society consisting of two parallel, unequal social orders, namely, the Western and the indigenous social systems (Armstrong and Nhlapo 1985:3).

The General Law and Administration Proclamation No.4 established a dual legal system whereby the Swazi were subject to their own customs and indigenous institutions except where such practices conflicted with the Roman-Dutch Law, the statutes, or the colonial government (Beardsley et. al. 1991). This meant that the Swazi were subject to two sets of law: the Western criminal law which applied to all persons (black and white), and the customary law. On the other hand, the colonizers were not bound by the Swazi customary law. On the contrary, the colonial administrators, missionaries, farmers, and traders, were enjoined with a civilizing mission - to guide the Swazi along the path of socio-economic development, which included the inculcation of the work ethic and the gradual elimination of "repugnant" indigenous practices such as witchcraft, regicide, ritual murder, lobola (bride price), and arranged marriages (Kuper 1947b; Crush 1987).

The other implication of the General Law and Administration Proclamation No.4 of 1907, in conjunction with the Land Proclamation Act of the same year, was that it facilitated the resilience of Swazi traditional culture.

According to these laws the Swazi were to live in Native Reserves and could not buy land outside the reserves - although they were forced to sell their labour to white farms, factories and industries in Swaziland or in South Africa (Kuper 1947b; Booth 1986:32). By and large, the Native Reserves served both as a reservoir for cheap labour and "the ultimate sanctuary, real and symbolic, of the family from cradle to grave" (Booth 1986:37)

It was in the reserves, then, that the Swazi monarchy continued to exercise its politico-economic control over the Swazi; and the monarchy launched a systematic campaign of cultural nationalism in which Swazi customs and traditions were endorsed, modified, and re-established through tribute labour, the regimental system, and national rituals (Kuper 1978). In short, for the Swazi monarchy, the Native Reserves served as a structural base for the development of a concerted cultural and political resistance to colonial domination.

Thus, while the colonizers relegated the Swazi king to the position of a Paramount chief and classified certain religio-magical practices as barbaric, heathen, and criminal, the Swazi rejected this characterization through ritual symbolism. The Incwala ritual is a case in point. The Incwala - to which the High Commissioner was always invited - recognized the king as the sole legitimate head of state who deserved the traditional royal salute "Bayethe!"

(Kuper 1978:79; Lincoln 1987:152). In the Incwala the religious role of the king as the high priest of indigenous religion was re-asserted (Kuper 1947b:110).

In addition, the Christian national Easter ritual - which was founded by Swazi churches opposed to cultural domination by mission churches - further portrayed the monarchy as a divinely appointed institution as well as the patron of both the indigenous and the Christian religions (Kuper 1986a). Like the Incwala which covertly legitimated indigenous healers and diviners, the national Easter ritual revitalized traditional beliefs in divination and witchcraft (Sundkler 1976).

Yet the response of the Swazi monarchy to colonial rule was also expressed in more tangible forms. First, efforts were made to regain some of the land that had been lost through concessions. Through petitions, deputations and appeals to the British monarchy, attempts were made to reverse the Land Act of 1907. While these attempts were unsuccessful, in 1940 the Swazi were able to obtain special grants from the British Government to purchase back some of their land from white settlers (Kuper 1978a: 150). The Swazi monarchy also founded a special fund (Lifa or "Inheritance" fund) through which every Swazi homestead contributed money for the purpose of buying back the land. By the time of Independence, the Swazi owned about fifty-one percent of the surface area of Swaziland, with the remainder owned by European farmers and foreign companies (Youe 1986:59).

Secondly, the monarchy attempted to exercise some influence over the Swazi who worked and lived in white-owned business enterprises. Within Swaziland, the king appointed royal representatives in major companies, and these officials served as liaison officers between the employers and the Swazi workers. As for the Swazi working in South African mines, the monarchy initially played the role of a primary recruiting agency, and a house was bought in Soweto to be used as meeting place for the Swazi (Kuper 1978a; Crush 1987).

Thirdly, the Swazi rulers embarked on a programme of cultural mobilization by establishing national schools in which Swazi traditions were fostered (Macmillan 1986). The main objective was to socialize the Swazi child - particularly members of the ruling class - into Swazi culture and tradition. Indeed many of the key political leaders in post-Independence Swaziland were graduates of the national schools (Kuper 1978a; Macmillan 1986). This move was also a "counter-reformation" to missionary influence since missionary schools forbade Swazi children to participate in indigenous ceremonies.

But the responses of the Swazi commoners to colonial rule were not uniform. The most popular form of resistance to colonial rule was tax evasion. As early as 1903, the Swazi made a concerted effort to avoid paying taxes for four years (Crush 1986:59-61), and between 1934 and 1939 tax evasion was the most common criminal offence in Swaziland. In each year no fewer than a thousand Swazi were convicted of evading tax (Kuper 1947b:66).

Apart from tax evasion, Swazi workers in white farms resisted domination in various ways. Farm labourers would refuse to work at certain times, claiming that they had been called upon to perform tribute labour for their chiefs. In some cases the labourers would even resist farm evictions, with the support of their chiefs, and others would desert settler farms without notice (Crush 1987:184-7).

Yet the social changes engendered by colonial rule also accentuated prevalent tensions between the Swazi ruling class and the commoners. The emergence of a plural society meant that commoners and other subordinate social groups could defy certain traditional obligations through recourse to Western norms and values which superseded indigenous customs. In traditional Swazi society, power relations and group conflicts could be expressed through claims of ritual supremacy and witchcraft accusations (Kuper 1947a). But during the colonial era some Swazi commoners frequently asserted their claims to autonomy through appeals to Christian teachings, Western legal ethics and work commitments.

Thus the Swazi worker could absent himself from tribute labour or obligatory national rituals of kingship, and some Swazi commoners took advantage of the social changes to defy traditional chiefs (Crush 1987:191-2). As well, some Swazi Christians - many of whom were commoners and women - owed their loyalty more to missionaries than to traditional leaders (Kuper

1947b:62). Most missionary churches denigrated Swazi religious culture, thus providing ecclesiastical support for colonial legislation which suppressed indigenous religious practices such as spirit-possession and divination. This led to a general cleavage in Swazi society between Christians and non-Christians, and between the monarchy and some mission churches, in particular (Kuper 1947b).

Thus by the early 1960's, some church leaders and women's groups belonging to mission churches urged the king to establish a democratic form of government (Kuper 1978a:217,256). As Stevens has shown, many urban Christian groups advocated a more democratic constitutional structure which would promote and safeguard equal rights and privileges for all Swazi regardless of race, sex, or genealogical background (1963:384). These demands were inimical to the political ideals of King Sobhuza II who strenuously opposed constitutional changes which provided for the diminution of the absolute political powers of the monarchy (Kuper 1978a).

In the industrial scene, the commoners' resistance to indigenous hegemony took the form of strike action and the quest for a socialist form of government. From the very beginning of intensive capitalist investment in Swaziland after the Second World War, the Swazi rulers had attempted to restrain workers from participating in trade union movements (Simelane

1986:147). In fact from the point of view of King Sobhuza II, strike action was taboo - an "unSwazi" way of resolving disagreements (Kuper 1978a).

As could be expected, the workers defied the king's orders against strike action on several occasions. Between 1962 and 1963 strikes broke out involving major companies in the country (Vilane 1986:183).

These strike actions were politically motivated. Led mainly by educated commoners and urban workers, this historic strike action aimed at radical structural change and better working conditions for the exploited masses. Under the auspices of a multi-party electoral system and trade union activity, educated Swazi commoners called for a Westminster-style of government in which the king would be reduced to a constitutional monarch (Potholm 1972).

Thus by the end of the colonial era two contrasting forms of Swazi nationalism emerged. The first was a liberal version of Swazi nationalism led by educated, "detrribalized" Swazi who advocated the establishment of a nation-state based on an one-man one vote constitutional arrangement with no reserved seats for any social group (Potholm 1974:222).

The second form, led by the monarchy and other educated traditionalists, advocated a brand of cultural nationalism that reinforced and protected the political and economic interests of the monarchy and white settlers. With the support of white settlers and the majority of the Swazi, the

traditionalists decisively defeated the "modernist" political parties in the two pre-independence national elections of 1964 and 1967 (Potholm 1974).

However, the triumph of the traditionalists did not mark the cessation of the conflict between the monarchy and the "modernists". On the contrary, political opposition to the monarchical version of cultural nationalism appears to have increased rather than abated in the post-colonial era (Potholm 1974). For the monarchy, one of the key solutions to this crisis lay in the legitimation of Swazi cultural nationalism through enforced constitutional change.

III. Independence and Cultural Nationalism

When Swaziland regained its political independence in 1968 Swazi culture was anything but homogeneous. The Swazi social structure comprised distinct social groups and classes which pursued different interests. The main groups were the monarchy, the 'traditional' elites, the European settler community, the non-traditional Swazi elite, urban workers, and peasants (Winter 1978).

At the head of the political structure was the monarchy which had successfully procured the support of the 'traditional' elites, white settlers, and peasants (Potholm 1966:316). White settlers dominated the local Swazi agricultural economy through the production of export-oriented commodities such as sugar, citrus, cotton, cattle, and vegetables (Winter 1978:34). Indeed

white settlers, together with multinational companies, emerged as major employers of Swazi labour largely because by 1968 almost fifty percent of the land in the country was owned by European farmers and foreign mining companies (Youe 1986:59).

The non-traditional elites and the urban workers, on the other hand, were a growing political threat to the traditionalists. The main opposition party, namely the Ngwane national liberatory Congress, espoused the Pan-Africanist socialist ideology which sought to protect the interests of the black working class and was radically opposed to racial capitalism and monarchical hegemony (Potholm 1974; Winter 1978).

The peasantry or the peasant-proletariat is normally supportive of the monarchy and about eighty percent of the Swazi live on Swazi Nation Land, that is, the land which is directly under the control of the aristocrats (Booth 1986:37). Yet there is no clear-cut distinction between the urban worker and the peasant, since many Swazi still regard the homestead in the village as their ultimate social insurance in "the face of all the hazards, complexities, and dislocations of modern life" (Booth 1986:37).

Thus to foster national unity as well as to ensure the continued political domination of the aristocrats, King Sobhuza II, in consultation with Members of Parliament, imposed a new Swazi Constitution in April 1973.

At Independence, Swaziland had adopted a democratic Westminster-style constitution which provided for a non-racial bicameral parliamentary system comprising the House of Assembly and the Senate. Members of Parliament were to be elected by universal adult suffrage, although twelve of the thirty-eight parliamentarians were to be appointed by the king.

But five years later (1973), King Sobhuza II repealed the Independence Constitution and replaced it with a Swazi Constitution which was formerly promulgated in 1978 as The Establishment of Parliament of Swaziland Order, 1978. This historic, decisive move followed the outcome of the 1972 general election which demonstrated the growing popularity of radical political parties among the working class (Potholm 1974; Viecelli 1982).

In his public address, later known as the King's Proclamation to the Nation of 1973, Sobhuza II charged that the 1968 Independence Constitution was "alien to and incompatible" with the Swazi way of life, and that it promoted "the importation into Swaziland of highly undesirable political practices" which have "engendered hostility, bitterness, and unrest" in the country (Beardsley et. al. 1991:viii).

The "alien" constitution was replaced by the traditional Swazi constitution in which the king assumed supreme power (legislative, executive, and judicial), and ruled by decrees in consultation with Cabinet Ministers who were to "continue in office at the king's discretion and be responsible to him".

As well, political parties and other organisations that "cultivate and bring about disturbances and ill-feeling within the nation" were banned and prohibited, and "in the public interest", political activists could be detained without trial (Beardsley et. al. 1991:22).

King Sobhuza, however, assured the nation that the new Swazi constitution would guarantee "peace, order, and good government and the happiness and welfare of all our people". In addition, the Swazi constitution was to be rooted in "the history, culture, way of life of the Swazi people"; and these traditions would be harmonized with "modern principles of constitutional law and international law" (Beardsley et. al. 1991: viii). This proclamation was a watershed in the political developments of post-colonial Swaziland. Henceforth, the monarchy not only reigned but also ruled: the Parliament and the Government of Swaziland literally became His Majesty's government. According to the provisions of "The Establishment of the Parliament of Swaziland Order, 1978", all legislation passed by the parliament had to be validated by the king (Beardsley et. al. 1991:viii; Kuper 1986a:132).

The Swazi parliament was to be elected according to the 'traditional' Tinkhundla electoral system. Here the country is subdivided into forty tinkhundla or regions wherein each inkhundla elects two persons to an electoral college which, in turn, selects forty of the fifty members of The House of Assembly. The members of the House of Assembly, in turn, elect ten of the twenty members of

the Senate. In addition, the king appoints twenty of the seventy members of parliament, ten for each house. It is from this parliament, then, that the king normally appoints his Cabinet Ministers including the Prime Minister.

Under this new electoral system there are no political parties, or campaigns, nor voters' rolls or paper ballots. At each inkhundla four candidates are nominated by the chiefs, and these nominees are disclosed on the election day. The election takes place in open fields where voters choose one of the four nominees by filing through one of four gates representing the candidates. The two candidates with the highest number of votes then constitute members of the electoral college which elects members of parliament in camera.

Therefore, the 1973 Proclamation legislated the political ideology of cultural nationalism, and it invested the Swazi monarchy with the political power to define and impose its version of Swazi culture. Through traditional rhetoric, however, Swaziland was euphemistically described as "the Swazi Family", with the dual monarchs as "Father" and "Mother" of the Swazi Nation. The king both led and was led by the Nation: he led the nation through decrees and was guided by the people through the Parliament, the Cabinet, and libandla or the National Council. In the Swazi Family there was no room for political parties, and the provision for the detention of political dissidents was depicted as a corrective measure or "the king's stick".

Following the 1973 edict, political dissent was expressed through extra-parliamentary social actions directed against the State. These actions included a nation-wide teachers' strike (1977), demonstrations by secondary school children and university students (1977, 1983, 1985, 1990, 1992), and the formation of underground political movements (1984), youth movements, and human rights organisations. One of these illegal political movements named the Peoples' United Democratic Movement (PUDEMO) called for the restoration of the 1968 Independence Constitution which placed limitations on the political power of the monarchy (Africa Confidential Nov. 23, 1990).

A typical response of the Swazi Government to the demands for democracy has been to detain political leaders without trial. When brought before a court of law, political dissidents may be charged with treason, sedition, or the violation of the 1973 King's proclamation which prohibits anti-government political activity (Africa Confidential, July 13, 1990).

The Swazi State and the Churches

The Government's hardline attitude towards political opponents is not condoned by all Christian churches in Swaziland. In fact, the relationship between the Christian churches and the monarchy in Swaziland has been complex. On the one hand, some Swazi Christian churches - especially African Independent Churches - are very supportive of the political structure in its

present form. In comparison with the mission churches, Independent Churches tend to be more tolerant of indigenous beliefs and ethics, and strive to inculcate these values and beliefs in their worship and social teachings. As I have pointed out above, it was these churches that were instrumental in the establishment of the Easter ritual in 1937.

On the other hand, some churches advocate aggressive involvement on the part of Christians in socio-political concerns such as human rights, poverty and oppression. These churches represent missionary churches which are now administered by Swazi Christian leaders. It is these church leaders who are often cautioned by Swazi political leaders against mixing religion with politics (Kasenene 1987:118)

Thus the social conflict between the Swazi monarchy and the commoners in Swazi society is also articulated in a Christian idiom. More importantly, this tension is expressed at the royal Easter ritual. The task of this research project, then, is to demonstrate the continuum in the monarchy/commoner dialectic from the political level to symbolic discourse at the royal Easter ritual and outside the ritual context.

Studies of the Royal Easter Ritual

The scholarship on Swazi culture and religion pays little attention to the Swazi Easter ritual. Preference has been given to the exotic royal rituals such

as the Incwala, Umhlanga or the Reed Dance, royal marriages, and the religio-magical rituals. With the notable exception of Bengt Sundkler (1976), contemporary scholarship, including the authoritative works of the late Hilda Kuper (1947a, 1947b, 1978a, 1986a) and Anders Fogelqvist (1986), tend to make cursory references to the Easter ritual. The characteristic feature of these studies is their structural functionalist interpretation of this ritual as a symbol of Swazi cultural unity.

Thus, current studies of the Easter ritual portray it as a Christian version of the Swazi indigenous ritual of kingship or Incwala (Fogelqvist 1986; Kuper 1978a; Sundkler 1976). It is generally held that the function of the Swazi Easter ritual is to consolidate Swazi kingship, to reinforce the indigenous worldview, and to foster cultural nationalism (Sundkler 1976; Kuper 1986a). Like the indigenous Incwala ritual of kingship which defines the Swazi monarchy as a sacred, permanent symbol of national unity and identity (Kuper 1947a), the Easter ritual is said to represent the monarchy as a divine institution, and the king is likened to the wise King Solomon of the Hebrew Bible (Sundkler 1976).

This being the case, the purpose of the Easter ritual is "to pray for the health of the rulers and the well-being of the nation" (Kuper 1986a:142), and the Swazi king is depicted as the "Defender of the Faith and the Guarantor of the Unity of Swazi culture" (Sundkler 1961:212). In summary, it has been argued by previous researchers that the relationship between the monarchy and

the Christian churches is generally characterised by mutual collaboration. While social tension between some churches and the monarchy is acknowledged, it is either dismissed as insignificant (Sundkler 1976:226) or as an obsolete problem (Kuper 1986a:143-144).

The above-mentioned conclusions about the role of the Easter ritual emanate from the structural-functionalist assumption that "the total pattern of Swazi life was, and is, dominated by kingship" (Sundkler 1976:207). Implicit in this assertion is the notion that all aspects of the social behaviour of the Swazi are determined by traditional moral standards. That is, one's actions will be dictated by traditional moral prescriptions pertaining to one's rank, age, and sex.

Thus for Sundkler, those church leaders who espouse radical views against the social order are classified as "outlaws" (1976:226). Indeed when the Swazi challenge the social structure, it is commonly assumed that foreigners are ultimately responsible for fomenting the "unSwazi" behaviour (Kuper 1986a:77).

The main problem with these conclusions is that they present Swazi culture - including the Easter ritual - in consensual and historic terms. It is assumed that, notwithstanding social and historical changes in Swaziland, a traditional value-orientation determines the social behaviour of the contemporary Swazi. In this regard, the Easter ritual is not only seen as an

index of value integration but also as a mechanism for bringing about national solidarity (Kuper 1986a; Sundkler 1976; Kasenene 1987).

Yet there are strong indications to suggest that many Swazi Christians - especially Christians belonging to mission churches - do not subscribe to the religio-political values inculcated at the Easter festival, and that these Swazi demonstrate their dissent through religious ideology, non-participation, or overt defiance. However, those church leaders who openly criticize the Swazi monarchy are never asked to preach at Easter conventions in subsequent years (Sundkler 1976).

Despite these observations, however, current researchers tend to relativise the social conflict that is discernable within the Easter ritual. This conflict constitutes the core research problem of this study. As indicated above, most students of Swazi religion and society are fully aware of the fact that religious differentiation within the Swazi Christian community is often related to divergent attitudes towards the Swazi social order (Kuper 1986a; Sundkler 1976; Kasenene 1987). Yet to date no systematic attempt has been made to relate the discourse of the Easter ritual to specific political actions aimed at the democratization of Swazi political institutions.

Therefore, there is a need for a "thick description" of the role of the Easter ritual in contemporary Swazi society (cf. Geertz 1973:5-10). The current perception of the ritual as an instrument of social control needs to be extended

to accommodate the notion that ritual symbolism can also serve as "an active superstructure" that both reproduces and disrupts social structures (cf. Geertz 1973; Turner 1969; Kelly and Kaplan 1990). This way of thinking has the advantage of presenting ritual discourse as dynamic and multidimensional in scope.

This study, then, offers an alternative approach to the understanding of the Swazi Easter ritual. Whereas other studies strive to show how this Christian ritual defends and legitimates Swazi indigenous institutions and values, my aims are to show how the ritual performance and discourse unwittingly reinforces social division between the monarchy and the commoners, and (2) to clarify the linkages between the religious conflict objectified at the Easter ceremony and politically motivated collective actions undertaken by Swazi commoners to challenge and reform the Swazi political structure.

Theoretical Framework

This study will be informed by the interpretive approach to ethnography which views cultural processes as "symbols in action" which can best be interpreted from the actor's point of view, with particular emphasis on human agency, historical events, and the social context (Geertz 1973; Marcus and Fisher 1986). As well, I will draw on other ethnographically oriented works

in sociology, history and political science which focus on political rituals and the various forms of resistance to political domination in modern societies (Lukes 1975; Lane 1981; Cannadine 1983; Cannadine and Price 1987; Scott 1985, 1990).

I. Analytical concepts

This study will highlight the complex role of symbolism as expressed in ritual action as well as in other forms of discourse and behaviour such as pastoral teachings and defiance of authority. The term "symbol" will be used to denote "a vehicle for cultural meaning" (Ortner 1979:94) and following Sherry Ortner, I will indicate some of the key symbols of Swazi culture which include the monarchy, ancestors, the church, extended family, and education. However, it is important to emphasize that a cultural symbol can have ambiguous as well as different meanings for different persons and social groups (Kertzer 1988:11).

The term "ritual" will be used in the inclusive sense to mean "symbolic behaviour that is socially standardized and repetitive" (Kertzer 1988:9; cf. Winthrop 1991:245). Implicit in the "symbolic behaviour" of ritual action is a representation of a people's fundamental beliefs, values, and aspirations in a condensed form (Kertzer 1988:11). This definition avoids the problematic distinction between religious and secular rituals, or the distinctions among liturgy, ritual, ceremony, celebration, and magic (cf Grimes 1982; Middleton

1989). Indeed in the Swazi context, national rituals such as the Incwala, the Independence Anniversary, the King's Birthday, and the national Easter ritual are both secular and religious; and the Easter ritual, for instance, is at once magical, ceremonial, liturgical, ritualistic, and also celebratory.

The concept of "divine kingship" will be used to denote the mysticism, sacredness, and sense of permanence that is attributed to monarchs or to the monarchy as an institution (cf. Feeley-Harnik 1985). For Kuper, the resilience of the Swazi monarchy can be attributed to the continuing "political hold" of "the myth of Swazi kingship" over the Swazi (1986:192).

As for religion, it will be seen as "a culturally patterned system of beliefs and practices concerned with the transcendent or the sacred" (Winthrop 1991:238). It is from this conceptual framework that I will examine the "double dialectic" between Western culture and Swazi traditional culture on the one hand, and between the monarchy and the commoners on the other hand.

The notion of the "double dialectic" is borrowed from Comaroff's study of the complex interaction of Western values and indigenous values among the Tshidi of South Africa (1985). Unlike some scholars who explain colonial cultural changes in terms of the encounter between the Great Western Tradition and the Little Indigenous Tradition (cf. Pauw 1975:56-66), Comaroff sees colonial and post-colonial culture as a composite whole made up of a series of dialectical, yet reciprocal processes which are both material and

semantic (1985:3). Thus the problem of cultural domination is not confined to the relations between the colonizer and the colonized but is extended to social tensions within the indigenous polity (cf. Beidelman 1982:21-25).

Finally, the "culture" concept will be used in the conventional anthropological sense to denote a system of "shared understandings that guide behaviour and are expressed in behaviour" (Peacock 1986:3). These shared and acquired notions include beliefs, values, customs, and institutions. In particular, culture will be viewed as a process or rather "a series of processes that construct, and reconstruct, and dismantle cultural materials, in response to identifiable determinants" (Wolf 1982:387).

II. Conceptual Framework

There are four main hypotheses undergirding this study. First, ritual is viewed as a form of historical practice that can be related to other forms of social action (Geertz 1973; Ortner 1978, 1984; Comaroff 1985). Geertz sees ritual activity as an existential, cultural, and social performance and in which the actor's world view is fused with the prevailing ethos of a given culture: "In ritual, the world as lived and the world as imagined...turn out to be the same world" (1973:112).

This perception suggests that the social significance of a ritual performance can best be discerned from the point of view of the subjective

experiences and concerns of the ritual participant. In short, ritual is viewed as an historical practice that is inseparable from social tensions arising from socio-political constraints in society (cf. Comaroff 1985).

Likewise Sherry Ortner contends that:

Ritual, then, is a sort of two-way transformer, shaping consciousness in conformity with culture but at the same time shaping culture in conformity with more immediate social-action and social-structural determinants of consciousness in everyday life (1978:5).

This depiction of ritual emphasizes a crucial characteristic feature of ritual symbolism, namely that ritual practice can serve as a "model of" existing social relations or as a "model for" a desired state of affairs, or both (cf, Geertz 1973; Turner 1988). Indeed Christel Lane goes on to contend that in conflictual situations ritual tends to signify the "model for" aspect of ritual discourse (1981).

In the Swazi context, I will use this paradigm to elucidate my contention that the Easter ritual does not necessarily reflect existing cultural unity as some scholars have suggested.

The second proposition underlying this study is that ritual performances can be used as weapons of resistance against the social order. For instance, where religious diversity is linked to social and political differentiation, a communal ritual may objectify and crystallize social conflict - thus "tearing the society apart rather than integrating it" (Geertz 1973:163). This

suggests that cultural practices such as communal rituals may be either dysfunctional or functional depending on social and historical factors.

This notion is further extended by Jean Comaroff and James C. Scott who maintain that ritual symbolism is often used by marginalised social groups as an instrument of resistance against dominant socio-cultural values (Comaroff 1985) Comaroff and Comaroff 1990; Scott 1985, 1990)

Comaroff's contention is that subordinate social groups in society tend to express their rejection and defiance of dominant values through ritual symbolism (Comaroff 1985). This being the case, Comaroff attempts to tie ritual discourse to historical events and social actions. She views ritual discourse as a mode of social action which can be analytically related to other more conspicuous forms of resistance against dominant socio-structural constraints (1985:263).

This contention is also shared by Scott who asserts that in a conflictual context, ritual performances are manipulated by the powerless as social spaces for the expression of political dissent (1985). According to Scott, a society's cultural values may be divided into two streams, namely, the "public transcript" and "hidden transcripts". The public transcript represents official definitions of key cultural norms and values, while hidden transcripts refer to unofficial expositions and criticisms of the social process which are usually

articulated through anonymous social actions such as elections, strikes, and mass demonstrations (1990).

For the purposes of this study, this theoretical framework based on the work of Comaroff and Scott will be used to discern the interconnections of the Easter ritual, social stratification and conflicting political actions in postcolonial Swaziland. I will argue that the failure on the part of some Christians to participate in the Easter ceremony constitutes an act of defiance against, and resistance to the Swazi monarchy. I will also show that this subtle act of resistance is not unrelated to the contemporary "hidden transcript" shared by many Swazi, which is the quest for a more democratic political structure.

The third proposition informing this research has to do with the concept of the "Invention of Tradition" by political elites. According to Eric Hobsbawm, an "invented tradition" is a set of new social practices established by political authorities under the pretext that such practices are continuous with the historic past. While everyday cultural practices change with time, invented traditions are presented as invariable (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983).

Similar conclusions have been drawn by other researchers such as Jean-Marc Philibert and David Cannadine. Writing about the newly-independent nation of Vanuatu in the South Pacific, Philibert argues that the political elite in Vanuatu constructed neo-traditional symbols intended to forestall political competition (1990). As well, Cannadine convincingly shows how British

royal rituals have been constantly recreated while at the same time presented to the public as ancient ceremonies (1983).

A similar practice is evident in Swaziland. I will show that the Easter Ritual is an invented tradition in the sense that it is a new royal ceremony which inculcates a novel politico-religious tradition, namely that the Swazi monarchs are Christian rulers who have been appointed by God to lead and guide the Christian churches and the Swazi nation. Although the portrayal of the Swazi monarchy as a Christian institution is a recent construction, the 'history' of this doctrine is generally traced back to King Somhlolo (1816-1836), the founder of the Kingdom of Swaziland.

The fourth hypothesis guiding the present study relates to colonial evangelism. More often than not, the earliest African converts to Christianity were marginalized persons (Beidelman 1982; Etherington 1978; Comaroff 1985). To many Swazi converts, the adoption of the new faith signified relative freedom, social mobility, and the acquisition of a system of dispositions such as tacit denigration and defiance of traditional values and institutions (Kuper 1947b).

In this study, however, the Swazi converts will not be seen simply as "detrribalized" or "Westernized" Swazi who are experimenting with Western ideas (cf Kuper 1986a). Rather, I will show that like Christian converts in other non-Western cultures (e.g. Pauw 1975; MacGaffey 1986; Schneider and

Lindenbaum 1987), most of the converts to Mission Christianity still hold on to Swazi traditional beliefs and values except those traditions directly connected to the Swazi monarchy. This suggests that the option of conversion had deeper sociological dimensions than the idea of "indoctrination" which is implied by Kuper (1986a) and Sundkler (1976).

Methodology

The process of data collection for this study was informed by the theoretical perspectives outlined above. Primary data were gathered mainly through participant observation and interviews; and from tape recorded sessions of the Easter ritual as well as other national Christian rituals, documentary materials published by different churches, printed pastoral teachings and reflections, local newspaper reports and reports by the government-controlled radio station.

Participant observation involved two main rituals, namely the sacred Incwala ritual of kingship and the national Easter ritual. The Incwala ritual covered the whole month of December 1991 and the first two weeks of January 1992. During this period I participated in the ritual in my capacity as an inducted member of the king's regiments. This privilege afforded me the opportunity to observe, ask questions, and to interact with a wide range of participants. Above

all this experience enabled me to discern the extent of the continuity and discontinuity between the Incwala and the national Easter ritual.

At the Easter ritual I was able to have informal interviews with leaders of the Independent Churches as well as with lay participants. The method of participant observation also enabled me to take note of the dramatization of divine kingship as well as social conflict expressed in the eclectic discourses of the ritual. Outside the ritual context I was able to conduct interviews with a representative range of church leaders belonging to mission churches, and these pastors had a different perception of this 'national' Easter ritual. As well, ordinary Swazi within my residential area were interviewed, and their conception of the Easter ritual was insightful.

The data from the local media, especially the press, proved to be invaluable since newspapers provide the social space for the expression of political dissent in Swaziland. Following the prohibition of party politics in the country since 1973, it is largely through the press that certain political groups make their views known to the public.

Secondary data for this study are drawn from standard scholarship on Swaziland in the fields of anthropology, religious studies, history, and political science.

The scope of the study will be confined to the Easter ritual in post-independence Swaziland. No attempt will be made to delve into the detailed

history of Christianity in Swaziland, nor do I intend to provide a systematic account of the Incwala ritual of kingship. These areas of research have been covered by other scholars.

This study, on the other hand, attempts to present an historical ethnography of the Swazi Easter ritual as cultural performance that dramatizes as well as strives to resolve prevalent social conflict between the monarchy and the commoners in post-colonial Swaziland between 1968 and 1992.

Chapter Outlines

Chapter 2. Social Change and the Genesis of the Royal Easter Ritual

This chapter will describe and analyze history of the royal Easter ritual against the background of the development of a more differentiated social structure in Swaziland since the colonial era. I show that significant changes in Swazi society such as the establishment of mission churches, individual land tenure, wage labour and trade unionism, and political parties helped crystallize prevalent social tensions between the monarchy and the commoners. I pay particular attention to the ambiguous role of missionary activity in Swaziland, namely the disruption of the socio-cultural fabric of society at the same time as the creation of alternative bases of loyalties for marginal social groups such as commoners and women (cf. Comaroff and Comaroff 1990:230).

I argue that the genesis and institutionalization of the royal Easter ritual reflected the continuing conflict between the monarchy and commoners. Focusing on the non-participation of most "mission Christians" in the royal Easter ritual as well as their public refusal to participate in indigenous national ceremonies which reified Swazi kingship, I show that this insubordinate behaviour of the mission Christians was related to other more overt defiant actions undertaken by many urban commoners during the colonial period. These overt insubordinate actions included the formation and development of trade unions and political parties in spite of the unequivocal objections of the monarchy.

Following Bourdieu (1977), I will interpret these defiant social actions as the habitus of Swazi commoners, that is, a set of tacit behaviour acquired by the commoners through everyday social practice as they compete with the aristocrats for scarce resources. Thus, this chapter will demonstrate the fact that the main concern of royal Easter ritual is not simply the conflict between Western and Swazi values, but also the continuing tension between the Swazi ruling class and many urban commoners.

Primary data for this chapter will be drawn from interviews and documentary materials published by different churches in Swaziland. This will be supplemented by secondary material from authoritative works on mission

churches in Swaziland as well as key texts on the cultural, social, and political history of Swaziland.

Chapter 3. The Incwala Ritual

This chapter will give an ethnographic description of the Incwala ritual based on my field research of 1991-92 in Swaziland. The description of the indigenous Incwala ritual of kingship will not only serve as an essential preface to the new royal Easter ritual, but will also highlight the conflicting perceptions and the meanings of annual royal rituals in contemporary Swazi society.

I show that while the Incwala ritual continues to dramatize key symbols of Swazi culture such as the dual monarchy, the emabutfo or the national regiments, and ancestral religion, the integrative role of the ritual is compromised by the continuing political tension between the monarchy and many urban commoners over the distribution of political power. I will argue that in the 1990's the Incwala ritual has become a partisan ceremony which reflects the prevailing political conflict between the Swazi rulers who advocate the existing absolute rule of the Swazi monarchy and many urban commoners who strive for political democracy.

Focusing on the political symbolism of kuhlehla or obligatory tribute service for the royalty, I will show that the participation or non-participation of

many urban commoners in the Incwala ceremony signified their acquiescence or resistance to the absolute rule of the monarchy.

Chapter 4. The Royal Easter Ritual in Post-colonial Swaziland

In this chapter I will describe and analyze the key features and themes of the royal Easter ritual in post-colonial Swazi society . I portray Easter ceremony as a product of dialectical relationships between the Swazi indigenous socio-cultural system and the colonial state, and between the Swazi monarchy and mission churches. It will be shown that in post-colonial Swaziland the Easter ritual, like the Incwala, serves to objectify and accentuate the political conflict between the monarchy and many urban commoners.

Focusing on the organisational structure, the dominant theme, polemical discourses, the social composition of participants, and the impact of the royal Easter ritual in modern Swaziland, I argue and show that the royal Easter ceremony is a newly invented royal tradition which has been tacitly resisted by most mission Christians through non-participation, selective participation, and polemical discourse. I argue and show that this pattern of non-cooperation of most mission Christians in the royal Easter ritual represents a refraction of the prevailing political culture of many urban commoners, which is characterized by various acts of resistance to the absolute rule of the Swazi monarchy. Following Comaroff and Comaroff (1990) and Scott (1990), I will

interpret the several ways in which mission Christians contest or distance themselves from the monarchy as a form of resistance to political domination.

Thus the semantic or symbolic dialectical process depicted at the Easter ritual will be related to collective actions of defiance undertaken by urban Swazi. It will be shown that the ideological bases of such actions are congruent with the religious ideology of mission churches, and by contrast, inimical to the key themes of the royal Easter ritual.

The general outline of the chapter will be as follows:

An historical and ethnographic description of the Easter ritual will be provided, pointing out its religious and socio-cultural context. I will also delineate the distinctive features of the Easter ceremony by comparing and contrasting it with the Incwala. In particular, I will trace the ironic development of the royal Easter ritual from a ritual of resistance to colonial cultural domination to a full-fledged national ceremony that bolsters Swazi Royal hegemony.

The time frame for this chapter will cover the period from 1937 through 1992, with major emphasis on the post-colonial era (1968-1992). Primary data will be drawn from participant-observation, interviews, and tape recorded sessions of the Easter ritual.

Chapter 5. The Royal Easter Ritual and the Politics of Tradition

This chapter will develop the central assertion made in the previous chapter, namely that the royal Easter ritual, as an invented tradition, reflects the conflict between the monarchy and many urban commoners in contemporary Swazi society. I will show that the royal Easter ritual, like other new royal traditions created in post-independence, constitutes an exclusive and politicised social practice which is inherently opposed to the development of political democracy in Swaziland.

The focus of the chapter, then, is on the role of the royal Easter ritual in the continuing conflict between the two political factions, namely the monarchy and many urban commoners. I demonstrate the historical, political, and ideological link between the royal Easter ritual and other new politicised royal traditions which were constructed in post-colonial Swaziland. I argue that the dominant theme of the royal Easter ritual is categorically opposed to political actions which challenge the current absolute rule of the monarchy.

More importantly, I indicate the strong link between the mission Christians and the history of political resistance to the monarchy since the King's Decree of 1973 which legalized the absolute rule of the monarchy. I contend that the persistent non-cooperation of mission Christians in the royal Easter ritual is part and parcel of a series of hidden and overt forms of resistance to the monarchy in post-colonial Swaziland. I will argue that during

the period in question, the discourse of the Easter ritual objectified this tension, while mission churches demonstrated their political dissent through gradual non-participation in the ritual, covert condemnations of unjust social systems, and implicit support of collective actions which advocate radical structural changes.

The most important primary sources for this sections are tape-recorded speeches of the Easter ceremony, interviews, the media (mainly local newspapers and the radio), as well as pastoral teachings and recommendations.

My interpretation of the discourse of the Easter ritual as an official version of Swazi socio-cultural values bears a conceptual framework that is akin to the notion of the "invention of tradition" suggested by Hobsbawm and other scholars mentioned above (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1883). The theme of resistance, on the other hand, finds its theoretical backing mainly in the works of Scott (1985, 1990) and Comaroff (1985) who maintain that political resistance to dominant social structures is normally expressed through symbolic behaviour.

Chapter 6. Conclusions

In this chapter I give a condensed summary of the distinctive findings of this study. First, I outline the contribution of this work to existing scholarship on the role of religion and Swazi society. I emphasize that the dominant theme

of the royal Easter ritual constitutes an invented tradition which exacerbates rather than diffuse the social conflict between the monarchy and the commoners. Above all, I maintain that the covert and overt ways in which mission Christians resist the dominant theme of the Easter ritual are continuous with other hidden and public political actions undertaken by many urban commoners to contest the prevailing absolute rule of the monarchy.

Thus, this study constitutes a point of departure from current studies of the royal Easter ritual (cf. Sundkler 1976; Kuper 1986a). While these researchers highlight the integrative role of the ceremony, this work focuses on the link between the religious conflicts expressed at the royal Easter ritual and the political conflict between the monarchy and many urban commoners. I contend that since the King's Decree of 1973, the royal Easter ritual has - unwittingly - become an exclusive ceremony which reinforces the tension between the monarchy and many urban commoners.

The second part of the concluding chapter outlines the contribution of this dissertation to cross-cultural studies of ritual and social change (Kelly and Kaplan 1990; rituals of royalty; cf. Feeley-Harnik 1985; Bloch 1989; Cannadine and Price 1987), ritual and resistance to domination (cf. Hall and Jefferson 1978; Comaroff 1985; Scott 1990), the invention of tradition (cf. Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983; Hanson 1989; Linnekin 1991), and missionary evangelism (Beidelman 1982; Comaroff and Comaroff 1990, 1991).

NOTES

1. By "African Independent Churches" I refer to Christian churches that were founded and run by black Swazi Christians as opposed to Mission Churches.
2. Linguistically, the southern Bantu may be classified into four main groups, namely: the Nguni (comprising the Xhosa, Zulu, Ndebele, and Swazi); the Sotho (comprising Sotho, Pedi, and Tswana); the Tsonga; and the Venda.

CHAPTER TWO

SOCIAL CHANGE AND THE GENESIS OF THE ROYAL EASTER RITUAL

Most scholars interpret the role of the Swazi royal Easter ritual from the perspective of the dialectic between Western and Swazi values. First, the Easter ritual is seen as a form of resistance to the divisive practices of colonial evangelism (Sundkler 1976:240). Second, the ritual is viewed as a symbol of an indigenized Christianity, and it is interpreted as seeking to recover and revitalize Swazi cultural values whose locus is the monarchy (Sundkler 1961, 1976; Kuper 1947b, 1986a; Fogelqvist 1986). Indeed it is commonly claimed that the activities and discourses the Easter ritual are largely shaped by the Swazi indigenous worldview (Sundkler 1976; Fogelqvist 1986).

These portrayals pay insufficient attention to the continuing tension between Swazi commoners and the monarchy. Too often, it is suggested that the commoners are pawns in the dialectic between the monarchy and Western missionaries. The founding and the scope of the Easter ritual, for example, is largely attributed to the genius of King Sobhuza II, the queens, and royal relatives (Kuper 1978a; Sundkler 1976). On the negative side, the lukewarm participation in the ritual on the part of commoners belonging to mission churches is explained in terms of missionary influence (Sundkler 1976).

No attempts, therefore, have been made to examine the active role of Swazi commoners in shaping the discourse of the Easter ritual. In this chapter I attempt to relate the participation or nonparticipation of commoners in the Easter ritual to both religious and sociological factors. My main contention is that the Easter ritual does not only address the problem of the tension between Western and Swazi values, but also the crucial issue of the growing cleavage between the Swazi monarchy and the commoners. I argue that this divide is defined, reconstructed, and contested during the course of the Easter ritual.

In my analysis of the genesis, development, and social context of the Swazi Easter ritual, I will show that Swazi commoners belonging to mission churches have always challenged the concept of sacred kingship advocated at the Easter ritual. I will also demonstrate that this semantic struggle over symbols is consistent with other social actions that challenge and undermine the sovereignty of the Swazi monarchy.

The focus of this chapter, then, is on specific, insubordinate social practices of Swazi converts to mission churches. These practices are in turn related to overt political actions pursued by the commoners in an effort to redress particular social barriers. I will interpret these social actions following Bourdieu's (1977) notion of "habitus", that is, a system of tacit dispositions that persons acquire mainly through everyday practice rather than through formal injunctions (1977:82).

This way of thinking has the advantage of interpreting cultural practices as historical actions in contrast to an overly deterministic view of cultural behaviour. Thus, I will show that the Easter ritual highlights what Comaroff would call a "dialectic in a double sense" of the Swazi social process: namely, the conflict between the colonizer and the colonized on one hand, and the dialectic between the indigenous socio-cultural order and its active subjects on the other (Comaroff 1985:252).

In what follows I show that the symbolic dialectic between the commoners and the monarchy, which is expressed through conflict over religious symbols, is indistinguishable from the everyday social conflicts between these two distinct social groups. I show that the Swazi, like other Bantu societies, defined and negotiated social relations between social groups and persons through religious rituals (cf. MacGaffey 1986:105). As Kuper aptly puts it: "[For King Sobhuza II] Religion was power" (Kuper 1986a:142).

The purpose of this chapter, therefore, is to demonstrate the political dimensions of the religious differences between the Swazi monarchy and the commoners. I begin with the role of traditional religion in the political structure, showing how the process of the conversion of the commoners to Christianity was a threat to the religious authority of the Swazi monarchy. This discussion is supplemented with specific examples to show how some commoners took

advantage of the dualistic culture engendered by colonial rule to assert their relative freedom from the indigenous social structure.

The final section of the chapter looks at the emergence of the Swazi Easter ritual in the light of the growing tension between the monarchy and the commoners. Here, I examine the complex political roles of the independent churches and mission churches. I argue that the contestation of the religious ideology of sacred kingship was intimately related to the emergence of two main conflicting political ideologies. The most popular was the ideology of cultural nationalism which sought to bestow absolute power on the monarchy; and the other was the liberal ideology of African nationalism which espoused Western democratic principles.

I will show that these divergent political ideologies emanate from the emergence of competitive social classes and groups. The monarchy represented the dominant aristocratic class which advocated the ideology of cultural nationalism. That ideology was, in turn, eloquently expressed in national rituals such as the Incwala and the Easter ritual.

Swazi Religion and Social Hierarchy

When the Swazi monarchy took the initiative to invite white missionaries from the Natal province of South Africa to Swaziland, the initial objective was to use missionaries as teachers of basic Western skills such as

reading and writing (Matsebula 1987:39). But the subsequent friction between the monarchy and missionaries was inevitable because the latter saw themselves first and foremost as cultural innovators.

For the missionaries, cultural change meant more than conversion to Christianity and the acquisition of Western technological skills. It also implied a total transformation of the beliefs, values, and behaviour of the Swazi (Kuper 1947b). As Beidelman rightly observes: "Missionaries invariably aimed at overall changes in the beliefs and actions of the native peoples, at the colonization of heart and mind as well as body" (1982:6).

For the Swazi monarchy, then, cultural change meant the abandonment of ancestral religion and other indigenous practices which constituted and expressed the ideology of sacred kingship. For this reason, the Swazi kings and other male aristocrats not only refused to convert to missionary Christianity but also prohibited the queen mother from "full conversion - including clothing in which it could be demonstrated" since the implications of conversion were "incompatible with the ritual duties of her position" (Kuper 1986a:70). Thus, to the monarchy and the Swazi ruling class, traditional beliefs take precedence over Christian belief, and the Christian religion conflicts with fundamental traditional beliefs.

Traditional Swazi religion revolves around the belief in the power of the ancestors or dead relatives over the living. When a person dies, he or she

is transformed into a spirit called lidloti (plural, emadloti). But the dead person is "brought back" into the family of the living through a specific ritual. It is after this ceremony that the dead person acquire the full status of an ancestor, and he or she can communicate with the living through dreams, omens, and diviners (Kuper 1986a:62). In addition, the ancestor can communicate with the supreme being, Mvelinqanti or "The First to Appear". However, Mvelinqanti is a remote being, and no specific rituals are directed to him (Kuper 1986a:61-63; 1986b:189).

The power of the ancestors emanates from their ability to protect and regulate the lives of the living. Through the services of the diviners, tangoma who are believed to be possessed by the ancestral spirits, the ancestors can give forewarnings, protect their kin from witchcraft, heal the sick, reward good behaviour and punish social delinquents. However, the ethics of the ancestors are usually normative, and the diviners who are themselves "appointed" by the ancestors can rightly be designated "the official upholders of law and authority" (Kuper 1986a:68).

Thus, at the family level the ancestral religion regulates traditional values such as the respect for seniority, patriarchal and patrilocal marriage, polygyny, and the extended family. For example, it is only the head of the homestead or clan who can communicate the concerns and wishes of his people to the ancestors during a family ritual performed for the ancestors

(Marwick 1940 [1966]:58). Likewise marriages are ratified in the cattle byre, which is the ritual space where the elders can address ancestors - and such a marriage is irrevocable (Kuper 1947a). Above all, family rituals pertaining to the ancestors derive their efficacy from the participation of extended family members, particularly the patrilineal clan (Marwick 1940 [1966]:58-59).

But Swazi ancestral religion is more than a family ritual. It is also the official religion of the local community and the Swazi nation at large. At the local community level, the ancestors guard against individualistic and anti-social behaviour. Through the services of the diviner and the herbalist, individualistic persons and nonconformists are frequently designated witches and sorcerers (Kuper 1947a:173-175). As Kuper notes, prior to the enactment by the British colonial administration of the Witchcraft Ordinance which prohibited witchcraft accusations, non-conformists were frequently accused of performing bewitching or poisoning specific members of their local communities (1978a:114). In the majority of cases, it was persons of inferior social status such as women in a polygynous marriage and successful commoners who were frequently suspected of witchcraft (Kuper 1947a:174-75).

Thus the diviner and the herbalist play an important political role in Swazi society. Both the diviner and the herbalist are "called" by their family ancestors and they protect the family, clan, and community against the emandzawe or the ancestral spirits of foreigners (Kuper 1986b). During the

colonial period, for example, colonial offices were derogatorily described as the "site of foreign spirits (emandzawe)", while the national cattle byre was regarded as the site for national ancestral spirits (Kuper 1972a:416).

In their capacity as guardians of the moral order, diviners and herbalists help bolster the supposed ritual superiority of the monarchy. Historically, leading ritual specialists have been co-opted by the Swazi monarchy to enhance the religious ideology of sacred kingship. Thus certain specialists are noted for rain-making medicines, others for protective medicines, and some for enhancing the dignity of the dual monarchs (Kuper 1978a:64-65).

Like other aspects of the Swazi social hierarchy, the notion of sacred kingship is expressed through the ancestral religion. First, the royal ancestors are set apart from any other ancestors. The royal ancestors are regarded as national ancestors and the king is the mediator between the Swazi people and the ancestors (Kuper 1947b:110). Commoners cannot communicate with royal ancestors, and they are prohibited from royal burial rituals and royal graves (Marwick 1940 [1966]:283-84).

As the chief priest of the nation, the king receives and transmits important messages from the ancestors to the people. King Somhlolo, for example, dreamt that "white-skinned people with hair like tassels of tails of cattle" would arrive in the country carrying two objects: the indilinga or a round metal, and the umculu or a scroll. The following morning the king summoned

his councillors to inform them of this important dream. He interpreted the dream to mean that white people would be coming to the country with money and the Bible. The Swazi were to accept the Bible and "try to avoid money". More importantly, the Swazi were to refrain from fighting the white people "for if they spilt a drop of the white man's blood their country would be destroyed and they would disappear as a nation" (Matsebula 1987:27).

The politico-religious significance of this dream is that it affirms the ideology of sacred kingship. That is, it reinforces the view that the prosperity and the general wellbeing of the Swazi depend on the guidance of the dual monarchy. From the point of view of indigenous Swazi beliefs, the dream was a forewarning from the national ancestors. More recently, at the national Easter ritual, the source of the dream is said to be the Christian God. Regardless of the source of the dream, however, the crucial factor for the Swazi is that it was a prophecy as well as a policy statement made by the founder of the Swazi State. Indeed this policy of tolerance and pragmatic pacifism in dealing with European missionaries, colonial rulers, traders and farmers has been consistently pursued by subsequent Swazi kings (Matsebula 1987:27; Kuper 1986a:154, 172).

The second attribute of sacred kingship is the mystical link between the dual monarchs and natural phenomena. The king is identified with powerful forces of nature such as the sun and the moon. Thus unlike other Swazi, the

king is treated with special medicines for the Emalangeni or "those of the Sun" (Kuper 1947a:22). This link with the forces of nature is also related to the power of the king and his mother to make rain. In fact, the essence of the dual monarchy lies in their special duty to make rain:

No commoner, not even a prince of the royal family, is allowed to use the special medicines of the two rulers. To do so is to steal the essence of their positions, their chiefship, and is judged and condemned as treason (Beemer 1935:274).

As such it is only fitting that the king should inaugurate the harvest season by "biting" the first agricultural produce at the Incwala ceremony (Kuper 1986b:189-192). This inaugural ceremony of the first fruits (which is also a ritual of kingship), takes place at the residence of the queen mother, which is also the "sacred centre of the Swazi cosmos" (Kuper 1972a:417).

The third attribute of the Swazi divine kingship is impartiality. Firstly, the balance of power between the king and his mother underscores the ambivalence of political leadership. Although the king is the administrative head, the queen mother is in charge of the sacred objects of the nation, and the king can only communicate with the ancestors and make offerings to them at her residence (Kuper 1986b: 190).

As well, the balance of power between the monarchy and the commoners is affirmed. According to tradition, the "the king is the king by the

people" and the queen mother is "the mother of the nation" (Kuper 1947a:55).

More specifically, in 1967 King Sobhuza II told the Swazi that:

I would like to assure you here and now that in our kingdom the king both leads and is lead by his people. I am my people's mouthpiece (Kuper 1986a:106).

This view of kingship is best dramatized during the Incwala ritual of kingship when the king is deserted by his kinsmen and left only with the commoners. As Kuper rightly observed, the Incwala defines social divisions in Swazi society while at the same time highlighting the fact that the power relations between the monarchy and the commoners are somewhat negotiable (Kuper 1986a: 76).

Thus the popularity and success of the monarchy hinges on the extent to which the monarchy strives to approximate the ideals of priestly mediation, benefaction and neutrality (cf.Beidelman 1966). In spite of these lofty roles of the monarchy, however, ancestral religion also reinforces the sense of interdependence between the commoners and the monarchy. For example, aristocrats tend to enlist the services of the diviner and the medicine men - who are commoners - to bolster their ritual supremacy (Kuper 1986b:190).

Indigenous Swazi religion, then, helps harmonize asymmetrical power relations in two ways. First, the ancestral religion promotes social conformity to Swazi values connected with marriage, family relations, community and national solidarity. Conformity with tradition means unqualified

obedience to the patriarch, the chief, and the monarchy whose powers are sanctioned by the ancestors.

Secondly, within this ascribed social hierarchy, persons of low status such as commoners and women can acquire greater social status through powers of divination and healing. As many scholars have noted, since its inception the Swazi state has co-opted commoners who are specialists in ritual, and they have been elevated to the status of national priests (Kuper 1978a; Bonner 1982; Crush 1987). Indeed according to the Official Year Book of the Union of South Africa of 1910-18: "the constitution of the Swazi nation is made up of the king, the chiefs, the indunas (the intermediary between the chief and the ordinary people), and last but not least, the witchdoctors" (Marwick 1940 [1966]:254).

Yet this does not imply that indigenous religion only deals with power relations. Like other surviving indigenous religions, the Swazi ancestral religion helps people cope with personal fears, anxieties, and shortcomings. The diviners and herbalists are believed to protect persons from witchcraft as well as to help ensure the success of individuals in getting jobs, making money, and generally to surviving hardships engendered by social change (Kuper 1986a:65).

Thus both at personal and at public level, Swazi religion affirms life, and it seeks to empower the individual to enjoy it (Kuper 1986a:61). More

importantly, through religious authority, individual commoners such as diviners and herbalists attain social recognition and prestige (Kuper 1986a:65-66).

Although British colonial rule prohibited some aspects of indigenous Swazi religion such as public witch-hunting seances, on the whole Swazi religion was tolerated, and the British High Commissioner or his representative was always invited to the Incwala ritual. But the missionaries, together with their Swazi converts condemned and described indigenous religion as pagan and demonic. Hence Christian converts could not only avoid participating in indigenous rituals but also adopted new taboos and practices which were inimical to the dominant Swazi values espoused by the aristocrats. This marked the beginning of the mental or symbolic dialectic between some Christian commoners and the aristocrats.

Missionary Practice and the Commoners

The success of missionary evangelism among the Swazi commoners was aided by the colonial pluralistic culture, the imperatives of social progress, and the impact of Christian beliefs and ethics. The colonial social structure enabled and subsidized missionaries to establish mission stations as centres of social progress; providing education, medical assistance, and religious and moral instruction to the Swazi (Kuper 1947a:108). In addition, missionary

practices were not bound by Swazi law and custom, but by Western common law and the authority of the British colonial administrators (Kuper 1947b:108).

In due course the missionary assumed the position of a landowner, employer, educator and religious adviser to the Swazi. In particular, the advocacy by the missionary churches of monotheism, individual salvation, and monogamy was amenable to most Swazi commoners and women (Kuper 1947b:118).

But for the Swazi rulers, as mentioned earlier, religious change would have meant the renunciation of their priestly - and hence their political - functions in Swazi society. As well, the practice of polygyny and its associated arranged marriage, served to foster alliances between the king and a wide range of Swazi including commoners, chiefs, and other neighbouring kingdoms (A. Kuper 1978:567). Indeed Hilda Kuper maintained that: "conversion strikes deeply at the vested interests of both the male and female ruler" (1947b:110). Thus, in a significant sense, the tension between the monarchy and the missionaries centred on the tendency of the latter to upset indigenous power relations in Swazi society.

Mission Stations and New Community Leaders

With the establishment of numerous mission stations in all the regions of Swaziland, the missionary became a new community leader. Given

the fact that by 1907 the Swazi owned only a third of their land, missionaries, like white farmers, became the new leaders and benefactors of many Swazi; and wittingly and unwittingly the missionary became involved in both local-level and national politics.

The first Christian mission in Swaziland, the Methodist Church, was established in 1885 at the invitation of King Mswati II (Bedell 1977:52). The missionaries were allocated a site at Mahamba on the south-western border of Swaziland; this region was a good distance away from the royal capital, but also a strategic buffer zone between the Zulu and the Swazi. No sooner had these missionaries settled down than some royal dissidents and their collaborators fled to the mission station seeking refuge from regiments of King Mswati II. When the missionaries shielded these fugitives, the king's regiments invaded the Mission stations, killing many Swazi; and Christian converts were suspected of complicity with the fugitives of justice (Matsebula 1987:42)

Although during this skirmish the missionaries were not attacked, and many of their converts were protected from King Mswati's regiments by the missionaries, following this incident about one thousand Swazi converts together with the missionaries fled to Edendal, near Durban, South Africa, only to return after the death of King Mswati II in 1868 (Bedell 1977:52). This tendency for some Swazi to align themselves with mission stations was best demonstrated at the local community level, where Christian converts paid

various forms of tribute to different missionary churches (Kuper 1947b:118; Parker 1988:121).

By 1920 Swaziland was inundated with several Christian missions, each establishing its own set of mission stations with its own following. Thus by 1860 the Anglican mission had arrived in the country, followed by the Lutheran Church (1887), the South African General Mission (1890), the Scandinavian Evangelical Alliance (1894), Church of the Nazarene (1910), and the Roman Catholic Church (1914). In these mission stations evangelisation was accompanied by the provision of primary education (Kuper 1947b:73), and the larger and older missions such as the Church of the Nazarene and the Catholic Church also provided medical health care in the form of dispensaries, clinics and later hospitals (Matsebula 1987:55,104; Grotperter 1975: 113,139).

Each mission station, then, was relatively self-sufficient, funded mainly by its mother country, and also its educational and medical expenses were subsidized by the colonial government. However, the converts too had to make annual or periodical offerings to the church, and this practice engendered a spirit of belonging and a new social identity among the converts. As early as 1914, for example, the new converts to the Church of the Nazarene would bring offerings to the missionaries in the form of agricultural produce and money (Parker 1988: 125). To the missionaries this was interpreted as a demonstration

of a "sense of responsibility" and "stewardship" (Parker 1988:25). To some Swazi chiefs, on the other hand, this was insubordination (Kuper 1947b:113).

Indeed some acts of insubordination were more direct as in cases where missionaries were called upon to adjudicate over marital problems arising from arranged marriages - an issue that was normally handled by the chief (Kuper 1947b:113). As could be anticipated, the missionary's ruling was in favour of girls and women who rebelled against forced marriages. Hence some mission stations became refugee centres for such women and "the missionaries became involved in many an argument with parents, chiefs, and rejected suitors" (Parker 1988:121).

In many ways, therefore, the mission station constituted an alternative community under foreign leadership. Even the African evangelists and catechetists who assisted the early missionaries were South Africans. As historical and missionary records indicate, the major mission stations were founded with the valued assistance of African evangelists and catechists from South Africa who were instrumental in converting many Swazi (Matsebula 1987:39; Parker 1988:133; Tsabedze 1988:15). Thus the Methodists, the Lutherans, the Nazarenes, and the Catholics established their churches with the help of foreign Africans who had no primordial ties to Swaziland. For example, the Methodists arrived with Sotho evangelists (Matsebula 1987:39); and the

Nazarenes and Catholics were assisted by Zulu preachers (Parker 1988:117; Tsabedze 1988:15).

In addition, many Swazi pastors belonging to Methodist, Anglican, Lutheran and Catholic churches received their professional training in Black seminaries in South Africa. It was these clergy who maintained the critical divide between mission churches and Swazi indigenous values, and this was demonstrated, among other things, by their indifference to the Swazi royal Easter ritual. Indeed according to one Catholic missionary,

"Catholics on the whole have not felt at ease about moving away from practices introduced by foreign missionaries in favour of practices more expressive of their own culture and heritage (Munro 1988:68).

This observation is correct and it applies equally to other mission churches like the Church of the Nazarene which saw "traditional elements of the [Swazi] culture" as a problem (Parker 1988:143). However, Munro's observation ignores the fact that the tension between the mission station and cultural 'heritage' or 'tradition' represents a struggle over values, status, and scarce resources. For the commoner the mission station symbolized individual achievement and acquired status as opposed to ascribed status. As Kuper noted, in Swazi society:

Nepotism, the granting of privileges to the kinsmen, is an acceptable principle in Swazi government, and power

radiates from the king to other members of the royal lineage, who are described as "children of the sun", "eggs of the country" (1986a:33).

The Mission Station and Social Mobility

All Swazi benefited from the social services rendered by various mission stations in the country. Some mission stations were established within close proximity to the Swazi royal house. These included an Anglican mission (ca.1860) and a Catholic mission (1926), and a Nazarene mission in 1927 (Matsebula 1987:104; Tsabedze 1988:23; Parker 1988: 126).

Yet the Swazi aristocrats kept a safe cultural distance from the mission station. For example, many royal children were sent to the newly constructed National Schools and many members of the royalty preferred to seek medical aid from the only government hospital situated at the colonial capital town, Mbabane. The main reason for this behaviour was that mission education and medical services were accompanied by evangelization and a different code of ethics which were cumbersome to the aristocrats (Kuper 1947b:110-111).

In contrast, for many Swazi commoners the missionary's emphasis on personal salvation, individual merit, and social mobility were more appealing than indigenous Swazi values. As trained religious leaders, teachers, and nurses, the commoners were entrusted with new leadership roles as cultural

innovators. In the Church of the Nazarene, for example, evangelists and pastors were trained at the local Bible school established in 1937, and credit for church growth is given to these Swazi missionaries, who included both men and women evangelists (Parker 1988:137).

A similar tradition of producing carefully trained Swazi religious leaders obtained in other mission stations as well. The Catholic Church also trained capable converts as nuns and priests at a local convent and seminary, and these people were later sent to higher institutions outside the country (Magrath 1988: 6; Munro 1988:37).

As new community leaders, mission-trained evangelists frequently usurped the powers of the indigenous religious leaders as they replaced indigenous ritual with the Christian rituals of baptism, marriage and funerals (Kuper 1947b:116). For Kuper, the new-found power of the Christian evangelist was facilitated by the "fear of the God of the Europeans" on the part of many Swazi (1947b:116).

The social esteem of the Swazi converts was also enhanced by their roles as teachers. During the colonial era over ninety percent of Swazi schools were controlled by missionaries (Kuper 1986a:58); and more than ninety percent of the teachers were mission employees (Kuper 1947b:117). In fact, the early Swazi teachers sometimes served as evangelists (Kuper 1947b:117), and in the Catholic Church nuns served as teachers (Munro 1988:38). In due

course, however, many Swazi primary teachers - both men and women - were trained at the Nazarene Teacher's Training College which was established in 1936. Those teachers who graduated from this institution were recognised by the colonial administration following the appointment of a Canadian principal with British qualifications (Parker 1988:131).

As well, most of the larger mission stations provided secondary education for the Swazi. In particular, the Anglicans, Catholics, and the Nazarenes established secondary schools with boarding facilities for Swazi boys and girls. Although some Swazi aristocrats later castigated the missionaries for enforcing too rigorous disciplinary standards at these mission stations (The Times of Swaziland January 21, 1972); many of the graduates from these mission stations assumed leadership roles in the civil service and in the Swazi nation in general (cf. Bedell 1977:53; Parker 1988:141).

The nursing profession was another area of specialization which highlighted the role of Christian converts as the new community leaders. As mentioned above, the larger mission stations attracted many Swazi through medical services. The Nazarene Mission, for example, was, and has been, notorious for its radical opposition to Swazi customs. Yet it was largely through its distinctive medical contribution that in 1924, the queen mother granted the first Nazarene missionary in Swaziland, the Rev. H. Schmelzenbach, "complete

freedom to establish churches in her country wherever he wished" (Parker 1988:126).

Thus by 1927 the Church of the Nazarene operated the first hospital and a nurses' training college in Swaziland (Parker 1988:131). It was these qualified health practitioners who were to serve in the numerous dispensaries and clinics built by various mission stations in the country. These nurses were not simply social workers but Christian workers whose mission, according to Parker, was to save many Swazi who "were being exploited by the witch doctors" (1988:121).

That Swazi converts interpreted social progress as the anti-thesis of pre-colonial practices can best be discerned in their cultural behaviour. Christian converts to the various mission stations considered themselves a subcultural group with clearly defined norms, values, and institutions. That is, they developed a habitus characterized by a negative attitude towards dominant Swazi customs.

The Mission Station and the new Subculture

Unlike Swazi Christians belonging to independent churches who attempted to synthesize Christian tenets with indigenous beliefs and customs, converts to mission churches strove to maintain a radical distinction between emakholwa (believers) and emahedeni (heathens). This divide was manifested

in many aspects of Swazi life including attire, eating habits, sexual morality, beliefs, and tribute labour to Swazi rulers.

Swazi traditional attire consisted of loin skins for men and skin skirts and a skin apron for women. With the advent of Western goods woven cloths became an additional items of clothing for both men and women. But upon conversion, the Swazi discarded traditional dress for Western clothes, and this was to be a visible mark of a mission convert. More importantly, native clothing was abandoned because it was "closely related to the worship of ancestors and to witchcraft" (Parker 1988:121).

When called upon to perform tribute work for the local chief, many converts could not accept the usual payment in the form of home-made beer, but had to be given other foods (Kuper 1947b:113). Even in more nation-wide tribute work such as weeding the king's fields, the converts did so as a separate regiment in Western clothing; and they were derogatorily called libutfo labokhololo or the regiment of those who wear the collar.

In fact, the aversion to tradition on the part of mission converts is more acute with regard to national rituals. All mission stations denounced indigenous rituals. For example, Kuper observed that in 1936, while the queen mother and her son King Sobhuza II were performing the rainmaking ritual, Christians were praying for rain in their churches. Likewise when the Swazi king inaugurated the harvest season at the Incwala ritual, some Christians were

bringing their agricultural produce to the church to be blessed by the missionaries (Kuper 1947b:127).

This meant that converts were rejecting the Swazi belief in sacred kingship and in the role of the monarchy as a symbol of Swazi culture. This attitude, coupled with the Christian condemnation of ancestral beliefs and polygynous marriages at the local level, amounted to the relativisation of the authority of the Swazi monarchy.

In many ways, then, the negative attitude of the Swazi mission-converts to the royal Easter ritual can be seen as socio-political protest against the hegemony of the Swazi monarchy. Conversely, the royal Easter ritual became a counter-reformation to missionary attack on both Swazi tradition and the independent churches (Cazziol 1987:5). Indeed the formation of the national Easter ritual was part and parcel of the emergence of Swazi cultural nationalism, a comprehensive ideology which aimed at the restoration of the sovereignty of the Swazi monarchy over the economic, political, social, and religious institutions of the country (Kuper 1986a:132).

Swazi Cultural Nationalism

The establishment of the Swazi national Easter ritual since 1937 was linked to the emergence of Swazi cultural nationalism which aimed at the restoration of the authority of the monarchy in Swazi society. In keeping with his

belief that "cultural nationalism is a preliminary to political unity" (Kuper 1978a:3), King Sobhuza II (1899-1982) took concrete steps to bring the economic, political, educational, and religious institutions of the country under the control of the Swazi monarchy.

The principal tenet of this doctrine of cultural nationalism was that the Swazi must select the best aspects of Western culture while at the same time retaining the best elements of their own culture (Kuper 1978a:2). While this injunction may seem basic and universal in its application, in Swazi society it meant that it was the Swazi aristocrats, namely the dual monarchy, members of the royal family, chiefs, and prominent commoners who were the ultimate interpreters of Swazi traditions and aspirations (Kuper 1978a:100).

In what follows, I give a brief description of specific historical practices undertaken by the Swazi monarchy in pursuit of cultural nationalism, an ideology that was to become the "sacred mission" of Sobhuza II (Kuper 1986a:158).

Swazi cultural nationalism was somewhat similar to, yet distinct from, the two main black nationalist movements that prevailed in South Africa at the beginning of the twentieth century. The first type of nationalism, represented by the African National Congress since 1912, was a moderate, multi-nationalist movement which aimed at promoting the full integration and participation of black people in the economic and political life of South Africa (Luthuli 1962:82).

This version of black nationalism was spearheaded by mission-educated blacks who espoused the values of multi-racialism, individual freedom, free enterprise, and democracy (Leatt et al. 1986:54).

King Sobhuza himself was a member of the African National Congress, and he too subscribed to the policy of non-racialism (Kuper 1978a: 3,100). Yet Sobhuza II was mainly interested in promoting the cultural unity of the Swazi working in South Africa, and he was opposed to the democratic forms of leadership which were promoted by black trade unions and political parties (Kuper 1978a:100-103). His preference for ascribed leadership over acquired political leadership became one of the cornerstones of his version of Swazi nationalism (Kuper 1978a:100).

The second form of black nationalism, represented by the earliest African independent churches and later by the Black Consciousness Movement in the 1960's, was an exclusivist Africanist movement which rejected the concept of multi-racial integration. Instead it sought to promote black unity through black self-determination and the revitalization of African communal values (Leatt et al. 1986:94).

Thus many of the black Christians who seceded from mission-controlled churches rationalised their move to found Independent African Churches on the basis of the Africanist slogan: "Africa for Africans" (Leatt et al. 1986:89). Some Swazi pastors, too, followed this trend and a group of Swazi

ex-Methodists and ex-Anglicans joined forces to form the United Christian Church of Africa in 1944 (Sundkler 1976:227). This Church became one of the Swazi independent churches which expressed their loyalty to the Swazi monarchy by their participation in the national Easter ritual at the Swazi Royal Residence (Sundkler 1976:229). This Africanist sentiment appealed to Sobhuza II and he was personally committed to the promotion of independent churches (Sundkler 1976:226).

However, the problem with this Africanist ideology was that it was inimical to the Swazi version of cultural nationalism since its leaders advocated democracy and African unity as opposed to Swazi cultural identity under the political leadership of the monarchy. For example, one of the leaders of the United Christian Church of Africa, the late J.J. Nquku, formed the first political party in Swaziland (1960) called the Swaziland Progressive Party (Grotmeter 1975:168). This political party competed with the king's party in the 1960's "despite warnings from the traditionalists that parties only caused dissention" in society (Grotmeter 1975:168).

The Monarchy and Individual Land Tenure

The first significant step taken by the monarchy to recover pre-capitalist power relations in Swazi society was to acquire more land on behalf of the Swazi. This land was to be shared among the Swazi according to the

indigenous system of land tenure in which land ownership was automatically guaranteed to every male Swazi who pledged his loyalty to the local chief, and by extension to the king, who was the ultimate authority in land distribution (Hughes 1962:254-6).

For the monarchy, the scarcity of land and the tendency for labour to migrate within and outside the country had a severe impact on national solidarity as fewer men were able to perform the various forms of tribute labour for their chiefs and the king in particular (Crush 1987:22, 192). As Crush shows, some Swazi commoners even preferred to live on white farms as tenants or squatters "independent of the chief's control" (1987:170). In addition, those few Swazi who were able to purchase freehold land ceased participating in obligatory national ceremonies such as the Incwala (Hughes 1962:273). Thus the scarcity of land meant that the Swazi rulers could no longer exercise effective political control over the commoners (Crush 1987:173).

It is understandable, therefore, that upon his accession to the throne in 1921, King Sobhuza II initiated a law suit in which the Swazi leaders challenged the validity of some of the land concessions made by King Mbandzeni [1857-1889] (Matsebula 1987: 208). Although this suit was rejected by the British appeal court (the Privy Council) in 1925, the British Government later (1940) provided funds for purchase of the land to be used for capitalist methods of farming and land ownership. But this new agricultural scheme could

not work mainly because of the objection by the Swazi leaders that such a scheme which emphasized "individual achievement was foreign to the Swazi" (Kuper 1978a:152).

Following the rejection of this capitalist experiment by the aristocrats, the colonial government had no other option than to hand over the control of the already purchased land to the Swazi monarchy. The monarchy also founded the Lifa or Inheritance Fund in 1944 with the object of buying some land from white land speculators, most of whom were absentee landlords. Every Swazi with more than ten head of cattle was required to contribute a head, and the proceeds from the sale of the cattle went to the Fund. Considerable land was bought through this scheme, and by 1962, Swazi Nation Land constituted about fifty-one percent of the surface area of the country (Hughes 1962:254).

With good reason, most Swazi preferred the indigenous system of land tenure to individual land ownership (Kuper 1978a:204). In the first place, communal land tenure was an insurance against landlessness (Hughes 1962:260) in view of the insecurity of migrant labour (Hughes 1962:260). Secondly, colonial legislation pertaining to land ownership discriminated against black Swazi by making it difficult for the Swazi to buy freehold land or to obtain trading licenses (Kuper 1947b:63).

On the other hand, however, to some Swazi, the indigenous system of land tenure was seen as a stumbling block to intensive commercialized agriculture because "a man who is too successful economically is liable to become unpopular with the political authorities in the chiefdom and runs the risk of banishment" (Hughes 1962:256). Indeed this fear of investment on Swazi Nation Land became one of the key contended issues for many Coloured Swazi (persons of mixed [black-white] descent) who advocated "the gradual modernization and improvement of land tenure among the Swazi (Cowen 1961:14).

The significance of the land question, then, lies in the fact that for some Swazi commoners the social practices pertaining to Swazi Nation Land held in trust by the king on behalf of the people were seen as instruments of political control. This fact has been well documented by many studies of Swazi society (cf. Crush 1987:160-6; Neocosmos 1987:105-110). As S. H. Simelane observes:

Colonial officials failed to understand that when Sobhuza requested more land for Swazi occupation he wanted land under his control and subsequently control over the peasants occupying it (1991:735-736).

The Monarchy and the Control of Swazi Labour

The control of the land by the monarchy was paralleled by attempts to regulate the behaviour of Swazi labourers employed in the new local and regional industrial enterprises. Here the Swazi monarchy played an important role in promoting capitalist development by providing the entrepreneurs with supervised and regulated labour (Crush 1987: 88; cf. Winter 1978:28). Jonathan Crush reports, for example, that during the minority of King Sobhuza II (1899 - 1921), the then Queen Regent Labotsibeni served as a paid recruiting agent for one South African mining company while at the same time controlling the flow of and the period of service for the Swazi miners working in South Africa. As a result, the Queen Regent was able to retain a significant number of Swazi commoners for tribute labour in Swaziland, on the one hand, and for the promotion of ethnic solidarity and loyalty to the monarchy on the other hand. By fostering Swazi ethnic identity, the Swazi monarchy was effectively inhibiting the development of black trade unionism in South African mines, thus assisting the mine management in controlling black workers' solidarity in mining industries (Crush 1987:89).

This policy of collaboration between the monarchy and industrial employers was also pursued by King Sobhuza II after his accession to the throne in 1921. As mentioned in the previous chapter, King Sobhuza was strenuously opposed to the new forms of association such as trade unions and

political parties. To ensure that the Swazi refrained from participating in such foreign practices, he would appoint his personal representatives - usually princes - to major industrial companies in South Africa to serve as 'liaison' officers between the Swazi workers and employers (Kuper 1978a:100-101). In addition, King Sobhuza's house in Sophiatown, Johannesburg, became the headquarters of the Swazi national Royal Club, which aimed, among other things, at promoting Swazi ethnic unity (Kuper 1978a:101).

Within Swaziland too, this policy of collaboration was maintained. For example, when the Havelock Asbestos Mine was founded in 1928 it attracted many Africans belonging to various ethnic groups. To guard against the negative influences of foreign workers on the Swazi, King Sobhuza appointed his own representatives to the mine whose duty was "to report grievances of Swazi workers to the managers and to himself" (Kuper 1978a:170).

However, this social practice was repeatedly challenged by Swazi workers. The first major strike action took place at the Havelock mine in 1948. Although Kuper suggests that the ringleaders were foreign Africans (Kuper 1978a:170), the 1960's also saw the emergence of nationwide politicised strike actions by Swazi workers which had to be contained by the British soldiers then stationed in Kenya (N. Simelane 1986:133). The Swazi workers were protesting against poor salaries and unsatisfactory working conditions (Stevens 1967:233). While the colonial government successfully quelled the labour dispute, it

became clear to the Colonial Office in London that the Swazi king "no longer enjoyed the support of his people" (Kuper 1978a:239).

The Monarchy and Control of Party Politics

The third significant step taken by the Swazi monarchy to retain its control of the commoners was to extend and consolidate the political and civil authority of the King-in-Council or the Swazi National Council. Every Swazi adult male was a member of the National Council by virtue of birth, and could play an important part in the implementation of policy decisions affecting all citizens (Cowen 1961:4). The National Council normally met once a year at the National Cattle Byre which was always situated at the queen mother's residence (Kuper 1947a:62). It is in this sense that the king was regarded as the voice of the people, and the National Council was believed to represent the views and interests of the entire Swazi nation (Kuper 1947a:62-63). In terms of day-to-day administration, however, the Swazi National Council referred to senior members of the royal house, chiefs, and some commoners (Grotperter 1975:71).

Although the King-in-Council was empowered by the Swaziland Order in Council of 1903 to administer indigenous law and custom among the Swazi, it was not until the enactment of the Native Administration Proclamation of 1944 that the Paramount Chief of Swaziland (the Swazi king), acting in

collaboration with his council, was legally recognized as the Native Authority in matters concerning Swazi law and custom. Hitherto, the administration of native Swazi had been vested in the office of the High Commissioner for Swaziland, and not the monarchy (Cowen 1961:5)

However, the Swazi National Council objected to some of the provisions of the Native Administration Proclamation which placed certain limitations on the power of the Swazi king. First, the jurisdiction of the king was confined to the maintenance of order and good government among the African Swazi (Cowen 1961:50). To the Swazi leaders the limitation of the authority of the king by the colonial government was tantamount to the denial of the legitimacy of the "past long lineage" of the Swazi monarchy (Kuper 1978a:135).

The second objection to the Native Administration Proclamation concerned the provision that empowered the High Commissioner to appoint or dismiss chiefs (Grotperter 1975:111). For the Swazi aristocrats, this legislation was inimical to hereditary chiefship: "Now to be a chief will depend on [one's] personal efficiency, which is not our custom" (Kuper 1978a:135).

In short, the King-in-Council objected to this law because it would "jeopardise the traditional position of the King and his chiefs" (Kuper 1978a:136). Indeed the Swazi rulers were so vehemently opposed to this legislation that the colonial administration had to replace it with the 1950 Native Administration Proclamation which effectively strengthened and widened the

jurisdiction of the Swazi monarchy to include all residents of Swaziland, subject to the approval of the Resident High Commissioner (Grotmeter 1975:112). The other crucial modification of the 1944 legislation was the provision giving the King-in-Council the power to appoint and dismiss chiefs (Grotmeter 1975:112).

In addition, this new law provided for the establishment of the Swazi National Treasury and of Native Courts which were to be supervised and regulated by the King-in-Council (Cowen 1961:6). Thus through the National Treasury the King-in-Council came to have some control over revenue generated from the Swazi Native Courts as well as from head taxes (Grotmeter 1975:162). Through the Native Courts the monarchy was able to exercise some judicial control over the its subjects (Grotmeter 1975:112). Thus, collectively these new administrative and judicial powers of the King-in-council ensured that the king "was not only the guardian but also the unchallengeable interpreter" of Swazi tradition (cf. Macmillan 1989:306).

Yet many Swazi did not see the Swazi National Council as an authentic representative of all Swazi. This became evident in the 1960's when the British Government initiated constitutional talks as a preliminary measure toward decolonisation. The immediate response of King Sobhuza was to attempt to halt the development of party politics by suggesting that white and black Swazi were to elect their separate representatives to the legislature, with each group following its own methods. That is, the European Swazi were to be

elected by secret ballot while the black Swazi were to be elected by "traditional" method of public acclamation (cf. Kuper 1978a:216-7).

This suggestion precipitated some educated Swazi to establish political parties which would be more representative of the different social groups in the country (Macmillan 1989:106). The first political party, the Swaziland Progressive Party, was a liberal party which advocated universal adult suffrage, non-racialism, and a common voter's roll which included all Swazi: Black, Coloured, and White (Cowen 1961:13). More importantly, this political party was critical of hereditary chiefship (Kuper 1978a:219), and it sought to integrate chieftainship into modern democratic structures of government (Cowen 1961:13).

On account of its radical position regarding political representation, the Swaziland Progressive Party was eventually excluded from the Working Committee of the Constitutional Committee as well as from a special committee of the Swazi National Council that dealt with the constitutional debate (Kuper 1978a:220-221). The main reason for the dismissal of the leaders of this party from the talks was that they were seen to be representing the interests of their party members, and not those of the Swazi aristocrats (Cowen 1961:9).

The second significant party that rejected the legitimacy of the Swazi National Council as a representative body was the Ngwane National Liberatory Congress (NNLC), which seceded from the Swaziland Progressive Party (SPP).

Unlike the SPP which espoused liberal democratic values, the Ngwane National Liberatory Congress (NNLC) advocated a socialist brand of Pan-Africanism which appealed to the Swazi working class (Stevens 1967:232-233). And unlike the SPP which was led by a Zulu, the NNLC was headed by two Swazi, Dr. Zwane and Prince Dumisa, the latter regarding himself as the "prince of the oppressed" (Kuper 1978a:235). This political party organised the historic nationwide strike action and demonstrations of 1962-63 which included domestic servants, market women, prisoners, and industrial workers (Kuper 1978a:234-236).

Both political parties, however, shared a similar concern, namely to persuade the monarchy to stay above politics and accept the role of a constitutional monarch. This position was also shared by the British colonial government (Macmillan 1989:306). However, the Swazi National Council - with the support of the European Advisory Council, the political party which represented white Swazi - was adamant that it was the only authentic representative of the Swazi people (Matsebula 1987:235).

Thus on account of the conflicting interests of the various sections of the Swazi, no compromise was reached among them regarding the composition and the powers of the proposed Swazi legislative body. Hence the colonial government proceeded to impose a new constitution, enacted as the Swaziland Order of 1963, which provided for a legislature headed by Her Majesty's

Commissioner for Swaziland and a Legislative Council. One-third of its members elected by a national common voters' roll; another one-third of the members had to be Europeans, half of whom were to be elected by a national voter's roll and the other half by a Europeans' roll. The other third of members were to be elected by black Swazi according to traditional methods; such members had to be certified by the King-in-council (Kuper 1978a:236; Beardsley, et.al. 1991: vii).

Following this legislation, in 1963 the Swazi National Council formed the Imbokodvo National Movement, a political party headed by the king. The king's party was presented as non-partisan and altruistic as opposed to the other political parties which were supposedly motivated by selfish, "power greedy" individuals who represented sectional interests (Kuper 1978a:219-221). But to the British High Commissioner for Swaziland, the King-in-Council was a stumbling block to social progress, inhibiting the emergence of "leaders among the Swazi people capable of supporting their king with sound, objective and fearless advice" (Kuper 1978a:251). Nonetheless, the king contested and won the general elections of 1964 and 1967, largely because of the strong support given by the rural Swazi who reside on Swazi Nation Land (N. Simelane 1986:146).

The Monarchy and Political Mobilization Through the Emabutfo or the National Regiments

The most significant step taken by the monarchy in the colonial era to promote Swazi cultural nationalism was the inculcation of a sense of affection and loyalty to the Swazi rulers through the revitalization of the umbutfo or regimental system (Macmillan 1986:108-112). As I pointed out in the Chapter One, one of the factors which facilitated national solidarity in pre-contact Swazi society was the system of nationwide age-regiments which overrode geographical and kinship loyalties, and to which every male Swazi belonged automatically (Kuper 1986a:55). The duties of the regiments were comprehensive, including serving as state police, court messengers, labourers, cultivators of royal fields, herdsman, and specialists in national rituals. As a result, there was no sharp distinction between the soldier and the civilian. The underlying principle, then, was ultimate loyalty to the king (Kuper 1978b:224).

Although the Swazi regiments were never mobilized to resist colonial rule, the umbutfo social system continued to play a significant role in the transmission of Swazi dominant social values. By tradition both men and women belonged to particular age-regiments, with the men being primarily responsible to the king and women performing specific tasks for the queen mother (Kuper 1986a:54,58-9). But beyond the promotion of active participation in royal ceremonies on the part of the commoners, the regimental system

inculcated indigenous values such as virginity, mutual respect, group morality, traditional attire, the sense of interdependence and equality, respect for seniority, and the maintenance of ancestral religion (Kuper 1973b:353-7; 1978b:224-26; 1986a:58).

For example, every male age-regiment was appointed by the king and it was the king who gave permission to members of the regimental group to marry (Kuper 1986a:54). The process of induction into a particular regiment took place at one of the royal villages where the initiate had to make a public oath in which he pledged loyalty to his king. This public declaration of loyalty to the monarchy was, and still is, likened to marriage which, by tradition, was irrevocable. The new member of a regiment, therefore, acquired a new status and identity. He was given a new name, a new social identity, and was held responsible to his peers in the regiment who were to become his "real" brothers and friends for life. As Kuper rightly points out, the regimental system "encouraged communal responsibility more than individual initiative" (1978b:224), and its main function was to participate in the "annual ritual [Incwala] designed to fortify the king against rivals from within and enemies from without" (1978b:224).

Thus, in order to revive this indigenous form of socialization, the Swazi monarchy attempted to introduce the umbutfo regimental system in public schools in the country. This effort was rationalized on the ground that

existing mission schools were a negative influence on the cultural education of the Swazi. Led by the Queen Regent Gwamile, the monarchy solicited the assistance of the colonial government to establish non-denominational schools for the education of the royalty and leading commoners (Kuper 1973b:357-8).

This request was granted and following the creation of a Swazi National Fund in 1911, the first National School was built next to the Zombodze royal residence (Matsebula 1987:201-2). By 1938 three National Schools had been established in which the Swazi leaders introduced the regimental system alongside Western education (Kuper 1947b:75). A further unsuccessful effort was made to introduce the regimental system in all Swazi schools. This proposal, which was supported by social anthropologists and the colonial government (Vail and White 1991:172), was nonetheless flatly rejected by mission churches and some educated Swazi who interpreted such a proposal as a reversion to "primitive conditions" (Kuper 1947b:77).

For the missionaries, the ceremonies and practices of the umbutfo regimental organization promoted polygyny, sexual license, immodest costumes, and ancestral religion (Kuper 1978a:109; 1986a:58). But for the monarchy, the regimental organization was a crucial training institute for future Swazi leaders who would be loyal to the monarchy. Although this attempt to introduce the regimental system was unsuccessful, the leading conservative elite who supported the king's ideology of cultural nationalism in subsequent

years were graduates of the Matsapha National High School, the leading National School founded in 1931 (Kuper 1978a: 107-8; 1978b:226-7; Macmillan 1986:111).

The significance of the umbutfo, therefore, lay in the fact that it encouraged group morality which was best expressed through "popular representation by acclamation and nomination" (Kuper 1978b: 228). Given the fact that the majority of the Swazi were dependent on the traditional leaders for their livelihood, and that over seventy-five percent of adult Swazi in the early 1960's were illiterate (Kuper 1978b: 229-31), the regimental system became a fertile ground for the mobilization of popular support for the aristocrats during the decolonization period. For example, when King Sobhuza formed his political party to contest the first general elections of 1964, the Incwala ritual of kingship came to be used as an exclusive ceremony for those who supported Swazi kingship in its absolute sense (Kuper 1978a: 262).

Yet, despite the politico-economic coercive forces that ensured the resilience of the umbutfo system of social integration, the participation of the commoners in the political, economic, and ceremonial duties that enhance the image of the monarchy gave the regiments a sense of belonging, honour, and prestige. In other words, the regimental system became a symbolic expression of the dominant ideology of Swazi kingship that "the king both leads and is led by his people" (Kuper 1978b:229). Indeed, as Kuper notes, the characteristic

feature of the Swazi monarchy has been its legitimation by the umbutfo since every major national ceremony always included the regiments, clad in indigenous costumes (cf. Kuper 1973a:615-618; 1973b:348-67; 1978b:222-239). As Kuper has convincingly demonstrated, the extent to which the umbutfo participated in the national ceremonies has historically served as a barometer of the popularity of Swazi kingship (cf. 1973b: 364-6).

The most notable exception to this social practice, however, was the royal Easter ritual, the new royal ritual in which the monarchy joined the Christian churches - mainly Swazi independent churches - in the celebration of the death and resurrection of Christ. During this ceremony, the emabutfo are conspicuous by their absence. However, for King Sobhuza II, the emabutfo were 'substituted' by the Zionist Christians whose allegiance to the monarchy was signified by their committed participation in the new royal ritual since its formation in 1937. Fittingly, at the Independence Thanksgiving Christian ceremony of September 8, 1968, King Sobhuza II publicly described the Zionists as "heroic warriors" (Independence National Thanksgiving Service, September 8, 1968: Archives of Swaziland Broadcasting and Information Services).

The Monarchy, Independent Churches, and Easter Ritual

The most significant step taken by the monarchy to influence Christian behaviour was to legitimate and incorporate Swazi independent churches in the struggle for the revitalization of Swazi cultural nationalism. These independent churches were united by King Sobhuza II in 1937 under one church organization called The League of African Churches in Swaziland. This body shaped the structure and discourse of the annual Easter ritual (Sundkler 1976:228). As Sundkler puts it: "To the king, the League was an instrument for uniting the Churches or for creating a national church (Sundkler 1976:228).

Swazi independent churches may be divided into two broad categories, the "Ethiopian" churches and the "Zionist" churches (Sundkler 1976:15). The Ethiopian churches represent those that seceded from European-controlled mission churches in protest over white domination and racial discrimination. These churches are called "Ethiopian" since Ethiopia, as an African country, was a symbol of African liberation from colonial rule (Sundkler 1976:15). In Swaziland the first independent church was the Independent Methodist Church (1904), which established its own primary school in the southern part of Swaziland (Sundkler 1976:229). The distinctive features of the Ethiopian churches was that they were led by educated Swazi who retained the liturgical structure as well as the liberal values of mission Christianity. Consequently they formed a new church called the United Church of Africa

(1944) which emphasized religious freedom and the need to Christianize national customs. This church espoused Western democratic values, and one of its leaders, J. J. Nquku formed the Swaziland Progressive Party (SPP), which challenged the absolute power of the Swazi monarchy (Sundkler 1976:226).

The Zionist churches, on the other hand, take their name from the Christian Catholic Church in Zion, an apocalyptic, charismatic healing church founded by the Rev. John Alexander Dowie of Zion City, Illinois, in the United States of America in 1896 (Sundkler 1976:5; Comaroff 1985:178). This church was established in South Africa by one of the Rev. Dowie's disciples (1904), and its appeal among African labourers and migrant workers lay in its emphasis on divine healing, apocalyptic fervour, and speaking in tongues (spirit possession). As many writers point out, these practices resonated with the marginal status of many black South Africans by emphasizing the holistic salvation of body and soul in symbolic protest against Westernization, proletarianization and its resultant demarcation of body and soul in South Africa (cf. Sundkler 1976:43-51; Comaroff 1985:186).

Most of the Swazi Zionist churches, therefore, were either extensions or offshoots of South African black Zionism. Some Swazi Zionist churches, however, originated in Swaziland (Sundkler 1976:208-223). Notwithstanding their South African origins, prominent Swazi Zionist church leaders soon

acquired the status of new defenders of the Swazi social order; a role which included the unqualified support of the royal customs and rituals of kingship, polygyny, widow inheritance, the veneration of ancestors, witch-hunting and the mystical fortification of the monarchy (Sundkler 1976:223, 231; Cazziol 1987:5).

Thus the Easter ritual represented a point of convergence between three distinct yet interdependent religious traditions which represented different social groups and classes in colonial Swaziland. The first religious tradition was the ancestral religion of which the king and his mother were the leading representatives (cf. Kuper 1972a:357). The second tradition was represented by the Zionist church leaders who revitalized ancestral religion not only through witch-hunting and tolerance of ancestral veneration, but also through active participation in the Incwala ritual of divine kingship (Kuper 1986a: 71). The third religious tradition was represented by the Ethiopian independent churches which were bent on "Christianising" or transforming some aspects of Swazi culture in the light of biblical injunctions (cf. Sundkler 1976:236).

The monarchy, therefore, represented the Swazi aristocrats and commoners who refused to convert to Christianity. According to Kuper, by 1936, 68% of the Swazi were classified as "heathens" (1947b:113). Nonetheless, some individual members of the monarchy such as the queens became Christians, and one of King Sobhuza's wives, Dzeliwe Shongwe, a baptized Catholic, was appointed Queen regent after his death in 1982 (Kuper

1986a:70). But as a matter of principle, conversion to any Christian denomination on the part of the dual monarchy was, and still is, considered to be incompatible with their religious duties as the high priest and priestess of the Swazi nation (Kuper 1947b:110).

For the Swazi rulers, therefore, the Christian religion represented a potential threat to the ideological and social structural bases of monarchical rule. But since the majority of the Swazi Christians were commoners, a concerted effort was made to establish some rapport with the Zionist churches whose charismatic powers of healing and divination earned them the support of the Queen Regent Labotsibeni in 1914 (Cazziol 1987:3). Thus upon his ascension to the throne King Sobhuza continued to maintain close ties with the Zionists, and he was regarded by the Zionists as a defender, patron, and mentor of their faith (Cazziol 1987:3; Sundkler 1961:212).

This alliance between the monarchy and the Zionists was not only facilitated by compatible value systems but also by the dubious as well as marginal social status of the Zionist churches in Swazi society. First, the colonial government believed that Zionist churches were subversive socio-political movements, especially because of their historical links with South African independent churches which, as Sundkler and Comaroff have shown, mobilized black resistance against colonial rule (Cazziol 1987:5; Sundkler 1976:45; Comaroff 1985:198). Second, the colonial government regarded the

practice of divination by the Zionists and the traditional healers as a criminal offence. But as one Zionist bishop put it :

King Sobhuza pleaded on our behalf with "the reign of those who eat like a crocodile" [European colonialists] not to ban the "crazy" Zionists but to bring them under his own supervision (March 15, 1992).

Third, the social standing of the Zionists among the Swazi was tarnished by allegations of extra-marital sexual relations between Zionist pastors and their female converts during prayer-healing sessions held in the mountains (April 16, 1992). Fourth, by and large the Zionist pastors were semi-illiterate with no theological training, and their church organization was characterized by incessant schisms engendered by disputes over church leadership . Their followers were peasants and lower class Swazi (Cazziol 1987: 5). Indeed European mission churches saw the Zionist beliefs and practices as "a nativistic perversion of the Christian faith", and more recently attempts have been made by some evangelical and Pentecostal churches to offer some theological training to Zionist leaders (Cazziol 1987:5).

However, to the Zionist leaders what appeared most significant was the fact that the Zionist faith had been elevated from the status of a peripheral Christian cult to a formidable church that was identified with the Swazi royalty. As Sundkler points out, the Zionist leaders assumed the status of religious councillors to the monarchy, and those Zionists who were related to the king by

blood or marriage became leading officials of the Easter ritual (Sundkler 1976:228-9). The Zionist faith, then, offered avenues of social prestige for ambitious church leaders (Kuper 1947b:125). Thus when I interviewed an elderly Zionist bishop about the raison d'être of the Easter ritual, he quickly pointed out as a matter of fact that:

This is a royal affair. On Good Friday it is a prayer day for the queen mother. On Easter Sunday it is a prayer day for the king. They ought to be there! (April 16, 1992).

Taken together, the four factors outlined above strengthened the political and cultural link between the Zionist and the monarchy. This bond between the monarchy and the Zionist churches became more evident in two historical developments which helped shape the structure and discourse of the royal Easter ritual. The first development was the concerted effort on the part of the Swazi monarchy to establish a unified body representing all Swazi independent churches, the League of African Churches in Swaziland (Sundkler 1976:228). The second related development was the attempt to establish a national church. In fact, King Sobhuza had hoped that the League of African Churches in Swaziland would lead to the creation of a Swazi national church (Sundkler 1976:228). In both ventures, it was the Zionist churches, and not the liberal Ethiopian churches, which played a dominant role.

The formation of the League of African Churches in Swaziland in 1937 can be traced to 1932 when King Sobhuza sought to unite the

independent churches under one church to be called the United Church of Africa (Kasenene 1987:172). This proposal was enthusiastically taken up by Swazi Zionist leaders who were eager to sever their administrative ties with their Zulu (South African) counterparts who, among other things, allegedly "took good money out of Swaziland" (Sundkler 1976:228). Thus when the League of Swaziland churches was formed in 1937, it fell under the supervision and guidance of the royalty, and the king's residence constituted the headquarters of the organization, where the independent churches would meet annually during the Easter ritual (Sundkler 1976: 228-9; Kasenene 1987:173). In addition, the constitution of the League had a provision for the king's representative on the executive committee (Vilakazi 1989:17).

From the very beginning, the League was dominated by the Zionist Churches (Sundkler 1976:228). To the Zionists the League was the antithesis of the Swaziland Missionary Conference, a body founded in 1929 with the aim of promoting cooperation among the various mission churches in the country (Kasenene 1987:73). Given the fact that the Swaziland Missionary Conference was seen by the Zionist churches as a cultural wing of colonialism (Kasenene 1987:173), and that the missionaries were stigmatized as those "who hate us" (Fogelqvist 1986:34), the League came to be seen as a nationalistic cultural movement which self-consciously identified itself with the Swazi monarchy (Kasenene 1987:173).

These conflicts have continued to the present, and they formed the focus of my fieldwork observations in Swaziland in 1992. For example, the League, in contrast to the missionary churches which were depicted as divisive and discriminatory, has been described by one Zionist bishop as "the first Christian Organization which sought to unite the Swazi Christians under the king" (April 16, 1992). This view was corroborated by the current king's representative at the Easter ritual, who claimed that the missionary organizations were not only racist but also favoured the educated, and urban social groups (April 16, 1992).

Indeed, for the Zionists, the king was more than the administrative head of the League of Swazi Churches. The king was a semi-divine figure endowed with unique wisdom and foresight equivalent to that of King Solomon in the Bible (Sundkler 1978:233; Kuper 1978a:110). The injunctions of the Swazi kings were likened "to listening to our own Bible" (Kuper 1978a:203).

In fact, the king's injunctions regarding religious issues were seen by the Zionists leaders as synonymous with God's will for Swaziland. Like King Somhlolo (1816-1836) who enjoined the Swazi to accept the Bible and reject the coin or money, King Sobhuza - like Jesus who prayed for Christian unity - extended King Somhlolo's injunction by pleading for Swazi Christian unity devoid of European denominationalism; his famous slogan was: "Search for the footprint of Jesus" (Sundkler 1976: 228). This directive was interpreted by the

Zionists to mean that the Swazi churches had to "throw away their distinctive names" and "arrive at the vividly right religious footprint which is to be taken and followed by the Swazi as a Nation" (Sundkler 1976:236).

In keeping with King Sobhuza's precept, in 1944 the Zionist church leaders began the custom of converging at Lozitha Palace on Easter Monday to discuss selected biblical passages. The purpose of these meetings was to reflect on the cultural implications of the Christian faith with a view to reaching a consensus on specific issues. Again, the king was expected to give the final word (Sundkler 1976:35). However, as I will indicate in subsequent chapters, what was significant to the monarchy was not sophisticated Bible exegesis as such, but the promotion of King Sobhuza's teaching that "the Bible is a forest in which individuals select different types of sticks according to their respective needs" (the Rev. A.B Gamedze, Easter Sunday, Royal Easter Ritual, March 28, 1975: Archives of Swaziland Broadcasting and Information Services).

This spirit of cultural nationalism was displayed throughout the Easter ritual when the members of the Zionist churches, clad in different gowns - white, green, black, red - with blue or green belts and sashes affirmed, and still do, their allegiance to the non-Christian king and the royal ancestors. For example, one of the main ritual actions of the Easter involved a procession and prayer sessions at the queen mother's residence as well as a night vigil at the

Ezabeni royal village, the burial site of Sobhuza's mother and other prominent queens (Interview with one of Sobhuza's wives, March 11, 1992).

King Sobhuza, in turn, encouraged the indigenization of the Christian religion on the grounds that the missionary, like the Swazi, had no monopoly on religious truth. Kuper cites King Sobhuza thus: "It troubles me to listen to someone who speaks with the voice of God ... Has he seen God with his eyes, heard him with his ears? We too have God. We Know he created us and we have seen his work" (Kuper 1978a:110).

Thus the dominant theme of the Easter ritual in the colonial period was that "The Swazi must find out for themselves what Christ meant by his teaching and pursue this" (Sundkler 1976:236). But underlying this apparent religious liberalism was a highly charged polemical debate between the Zionist churches and the missionary churches, the latter being accused of intolerance, social division, and division among themselves (Sundkler 1976:238-142). As Fogelqvist notes, the Easter ritual became concerned less with the celebration of the death and resurrection of Jesus and more with "the king's recognition of the Zionists and their churches as authentic" (1986:34).

That the monarchy gave full recognition to the Zionists became apparent when one of the queen mothers, Nukwase (1937-57), a sister to Sobhuza's mother, took the initiative to build a Swazi National Church. Although this idea was enthusiastically supported by all the independent churches which

recognized the need for a Swazi National Church on a par with the Anglican, Lutheran, and Scandinavian national churches prevalent in Swaziland (Sundkler 1976:224), the Zionists were the most supportive of this venture. In fact, to the Zionists the notion of a National Church was linked to their perception of the Easter ritual as a "Christian Incwala", that is, a Christian ritual of kingship (Kuper 1978a:157). Like the League of African Churches in Swaziland which was headed by the king, the National Church was to have the king as its patron (Kuper 1947b:125).

When the King-in-Council approved this idea in 1944, the queen mother was appointed the honorary treasurer of the working committee, and King Sobhuza allocated the site for the construction of the church within the royal capital. And, in keeping with the ideology of cultural nationalism, the Swazi National Council regarded the National Church as a royal church (Kuper 1978a:157).

Although the actual construction of the church began in 1953, the church building was not completed until after Independence in 1968. On account of substantial financial donations given by the Zionist churches, and by their ideological alliance with the king, the Swazi National Church came to be seen as the "cathedral" of the Zionist churches (Cazziol 1987:6).

For many leaders of the Ethiopian churches, collaboration with the Zionist churches and the monarchy was facilitated more by the then common

aversion to European domination and racism in the church than by concerns about Swazi cultural unity (cf. Kuper 1947b:125). As Sundkler suggests, some of the Ethiopian leaders manipulated the authority of the king in their struggles for the recognition of their churches by the colonial administration (Sundkler 1976:227).

Like the Zionists, the Ethiopian churches were opposed to European cultural domination within the church, and some of these churches even condoned traditional social practices like polygyny and widow inheritance (Kuper 1947b:125). Again, like the Zionist groups, the Ethiopian churches acknowledged the authority of the Swazi monarchy and some of their leaders served as advisors to the king and the Swazi Nation Council (Sundkler 1976:227).

Unlike the Zionists, however, the leaders of the Ethiopian churches were better educated, had received Western theological education, and they despised the Zionists (Sundkler 1976:226; Vilakazi 1989:16). The Ethiopians represented a liberal form of Swazi nationalism which sought to protect the rights of the individual. For example, in 1944 a group of Ethiopian church leaders, mainly ex-Methodists, formed their own church called the United Christian Church in Africa which espoused Western liberal notions, including the "full liberty of all men to worship God according to the dictates of their consciences" (Sundkler 1976:227). In fact, their goal was to convert this church

into a Swazi National Church. However, the growth and influence of this church was handicapped by internal power struggles (Sundkler 1976:227).

Although these non-Zionist church leaders participated in the Easter ritual, their religious ideology was at variance with the parochial ideals of Swazi cultural nationalism (Sundkler 1976:227). It is not surprising, therefore, that one of the leaders of this group, Mr J. J. Nquku, was instrumental in the establishment of the first political party in Swaziland, the Swaziland Progressive Party, which subsequently split into three different political parties, all of which were opposed to the king's ideology of cultural nationalism (Grotperter 1975:123-4).

More significantly, most of the leading Ethiopian church leaders reverted to their former mission churches following the elimination of racial discrimination in their respective churches (Cazziol 1987:4). For example, the former President of the United Christian Church of Africa (an Independent Church), the Reverend Z. Kunene, became the first Swazi Superintendent of the multi-racial Methodist Church in Swaziland in 1974 (Bedell 1977:50). As well, the United Christian Church of Africa later became affiliated with the Council of Swaziland Churches, a liberal organization founded in 1976 by educated Swazi leaders of the Anglican, Catholic, and Lutheran churches. (Kasenene 1987:179).

More recently, two of the older Swazi independent churches, namely, the African Methodist Episcopal Church and the Christian Apostolic Holy Spirit Church in Zion, are now affiliated with Council of Swaziland Churches, and not with the League of Swaziland Churches which identifies itself with the Swazi monarchy (Council of Swaziland Churches Annual Report 1986-87).

The fact that the Ethiopian church leaders gradually withdrew and detached themselves from the League and the Easter ritual to re-join the mainline mission churches casts some doubts on Sundkler's claim that the Easter ritual "strengthened" the unity of Swazi culture (cf. Sundkler 1976:243). The reversion of these church leaders can be seen as a form of resistance to the religious ideology of the Easter ritual. Indeed, as I will show in the following chapters, one of the critical issues that has been repeatedly raised at the Easter ritual in post-colonial Swaziland is the noticeable absence of the mainline mission churches (cf. Easter ritual, 1975).

Conclusion

This chapter has attempted to highlight the endogenous dimension of social change in Swaziland during the colonial era. Following Comaroff's concept of the "double dialectic" which interprets the social conflict between the colonizer and the colonized in conjunction with the internal tensions arising from socio-cultural constraints in the indigenous social system, I indicated that

social change - including religious change - offered new sources of social power, namely: the church, wage labour, specialized professions, trade unions, and party politics - all of which were regarded by the monarchy as detrimental to national stability.

Given the fact that the indigenous hierarchical system defined social status and rank according to clan and lineage (Kuper 1986a:113), many Swazi commoners soon acquired and developed a distinctive configuration of value systems and social practices - Bourdieu's habitus - which was inimical to the political interests of the aristocrats. A typical habitus of the commoners comprised the following: detachment from royal duties and ceremonies, religious freedom, high valuation of acquired status, class consciousness, the quest for democracy, and the sense of mission to change some aspects of Swazi culture.

Meanwhile the monarchy, under the strong and astute leadership of King Sobhuza II (1921-82), invented a series of 'Swazi traditions' to forestall the evolution of the privatization of land, freedom of association, and Western forms of democracy. As I mentioned in Chapter 1, by "invented traditions" I mean a set of new cultural practices promoted by the political elite in an attempt to instill certain values and norms that are presumed to be continuous with 'tradition'. Unlike other cultural practices which undergo major modifications in keeping with changing circumstances, invented traditions are presumed to be

timeless, unchanging, and hence formalized and ritualized (Hobsbawm 1983:1-2).

In Swaziland, this process was not only eased by the monarchical control over land allocation and distribution, but it was also facilitated by the fact that jurisdiction of the king over "Swazi law and custom" was entrenched in the constitution of the British colonial state. These invented traditions included the ruling against private ownership of land, the appointment of royal representatives at the work place, the introduction of the umbutfo regimental system in national schools, the formation of a king's political party, and the Easter ritual.

As we have seen, the above mentioned "traditions" were resisted by some Swazi on the grounds that these neo-traditions were not seen to have been instituted in the interests of all Swazi but only to buttress the political and cultural domination of the monarchy. Thus the Swazi workers, the political parties, the missions, and many Swazi Christians challenged the monarchical ideology of Swazi cultural nationalism.

As an invented tradition, the Easter ritual aimed at re-defining the relationship between the monarchy and Swazi Christians. In Chapter 3, I will explain why the Easter ritual is an invented tradition. Here, it is important to note that, like the other invented traditions which portray the king as a benign, non-partisan sovereign leader, the Easter ritual re-presents the king and the

queen mother as custodians of the Christian religion, and their status places them above Christian denominationalism. Above all, the monarchy is credited with introducing the Christian religion to Swaziland, the coming of which was revealed by God through King Somhlolo, the founder of the Swazi State.

Thus in his capacity as the patron of Swazi religion, King Sobhuza II played a leading role in the formation of the League of African Churches in Swaziland, the umbrella organization of Swazi independent churches which gave birth to the founding of the royal Easter ritual. This annual Easter ceremony which legitimated and promoted Swazi indigenous religion and the indigenous churches, was rightly interpreted by many scholars as a symbol of cultural resistance against missionary evangelism as well as an expression of Swazi nationalism (cf. Kuper 1986a:71; Sundkler 1976:243).

However, by the end of the colonial period, the polemics of the royal Easter ritual were directed toward Swazi Christians who detached themselves from the monarchy. The main theme of the ritual was that obedience to the directives of the monarchs - who transmit God's messages to the Swazi - will bring peace and prosperity to the Swazi nation. To King Sobhuza II, the attainment of political independence from colonial rule was the fulfilment of King "Somhlolo's prophecy" that if the Swazi did not harm the European but accepted the Umculu (the scroll) or the Bible, they would prosper as a nation

(The King's Speech, Independence Thanksgiving Service, September 8, 1968: Archives of Swaziland Broadcasting and Information Services).

Thus, the main discourse of the Easter ritual can be seen as a response to the crisis of Swazi national identity. In the following chapters I present the Easter ritual in post-Independence Swaziland as a royal ceremony which does not simply reflect the "all-pervading and integrating influence of Swazi kingship" (Sundkler 1976:208; cf. Kuper 1986a:142), or the "severe process of critical re-interpretation of the European presence, including that of the missionaries" (Sundkler 1976:239), but as a formalized neo-royal tradition which expresses and embodies a system of beliefs, practices, and ethics which are nonetheless contested and even rejected by some Swazi commoners through discourse, symbolic behaviour, and explicit social action.

CHAPTER THREE

THE INCWALA RITUAL

In this chapter I present an ethnographic description of the Incwala ceremony based on my fieldwork in Swaziland from November 1991 through May 1992. Although the Easter ritual is the main focus of this study, its cultural significance can better be understood against the background of the Incwala, the ritual of Swazi kingship which is officially regarded as "the most mystic and sacred" of all Swazi national ceremonies (Swaziland Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Tourism, 1990:132).

While existing ethnographies of the Incwala tend to over-emphasize the contribution of the ritual to the promotion and preservation of national integration, and cultural nationalism (Kuper 1972a:608-609); I focus on the context of the ritual, particularly the conflicting perceptions and meanings of this royal ritual to the different social groups in contemporary Swazi society.

I argue that, notwithstanding its strong cultural and nationalistic orientation, the Incwala of 1991-92 reflected and crystallized the on-going struggle between the monarchy and some urban commoners for the control of state power. I show that this political conflict became more acute in 1991-92 when the commoners defied the King's Decree of 1973 which banned political meetings and party politics by establishing new radical political parties and

associations which openly criticized and rejected the absolute rule of the monarchy and called for the democratization of the Swazi political system.

The outline of this chapter is as follows. I begin with a description of the social climate of the 1991-92 fieldwork, focusing on the unprecedented political conflict between the monarchy and the urban commoners since the King's Decree of 1973. I show that much of the dialectic between the two groups centred on conflicting interpretations of the role of kingship in modern Swaziland. Here I note the growing appeal of the ideologies of human rights and democracy to many urban Swazi commoners who accuse the political elites of imposing Swazi 'tradition' on the masses.

Secondly, I give a brief analysis of the limitations of previous ethnographies of the Incwala, showing the influence of the intellectual and political milieu of the 1960's and 1970's which focused on the legitimacy, viability, and resistance of indigenous cultures in the modern world. As I show in this chapter, in the 1990's, urban Swazi are more critical of 'tradition'; and the ideology of human rights appears to be more integrative than are rituals of royalty.

Thirdly, I describe the Incwala of 1991-92. I show that the politicization and polarization of Swazi society was reflected in the different meanings attached to kuhlehla (or the participation in the Incwala ritual). I emphasize that the symbolism of participation is now more complex than it was

in earlier periods. While the participation or non-participation of the Swazi in the Incwala was formerly seen as an optional matter (Kuper 1972a:614) or a prudent action for political appointees (Kuper 1972a:614); in 1991-2, the act of participation was perceived by many Swazi, participants and non-participants, as a symbol of political division between the 'traditionalists' and the 'detrribalized'.

The Social Context

The politico-social climate of my field research was characterized by the resurgence of the historical conflict between the 'traditionalists' and the urban commoners over the control of the independent Swazi state. The two groups differed on the question of the constitutional role of kingship in modern Swaziland. The 'traditional' political elites, on one hand, advocated the retention of the 'Swazi' Tinkhundla system of government of 1978 which prohibited party-politics and invested the monarchy with absolute power over the Parliament; while the urban educated commoners, on the other hand, favoured the 1968 Independence Constitution which provided for multi-party democracy and invested Parliament - not the king - with executive, legislative and judiciary power.

Since 1973 when King Sobhuza II repealed the liberal 1968 Independence Constitution, political dissent concerning the absolute rule of the

monarchy was suppressed in part through legislation such as the 60-Days Detention without Trial or "the king's stick" as Prince Masitsela defined it in February 1992 (cf. Kuper 1986a:137). Thus many opponents of the Swazi political system fled the country and formed underground political movements, which included the Ngwane Socialist Revolutionary Party (1978) and the People's United Democratic Movement (1983).

However, the conflict of 1991-92 was unique in several respects. First, the new radical political groups and associations which claimed to represent the suppressed commoners were more open, daring, defiant, polemical and systematic in their campaign to reject the current political system. For example, in February 1992, PUDEMO, the main underground political party, called a press conference in Mbabane, the capital city of Swaziland, in which the party unbanned itself and announced its president and secretary-general, both of whom were former political detainees (The Swazi Observer, 26 Feb. 1992, p.1).

In its Open Letter to the king dated June 28, 1991, PUDEMO had categorically denounced the King's Decree of 1973 as "illegal, unconstitutional, and an abuse of public office" (The Weekend Sun, 24 Jan. - 7 Feb. 1992, p.3); and characterized the Swazi political as an authoritarian, partisan regime that imposed the policies of the Imbokodvo National Movement (the king's political party) on the people. This being the case, PUDEMO rejected the attempts

made by the Swazi political leaders to reform the Tinkhundla political system. Instead, PUDEMO called on the king to conduct a National Referendum to determine whether the Swazi wanted multi-party democracy or not (The Weekend Sun, 24 Jan. - 7 Feb. 1992, p.3).

Following PUDEMO's head-on confrontation with Swazi political leaders, other political groups emerged in defiance of the law prohibiting party-politics in Swaziland. These parties were the Swaziland United Front and the Swaziland National Front. Like Pudemo these parties advertised themselves through the local media and they all rejected the present political regime in favour of multiparty democracy. The political significance of these new political parties lay in the fact that they were opposed to the King's Decree of 1992 in which the king enjoined the Swazi to reform - and not - replace the existing Tinkhundla system of government.

In addition to political parties, the new radical associations formed by urban commoners were the Swaziland Youth Congress (SWAYOCO) and the Human Rights Association of Swaziland (HUMARAS). The Swaziland Youth Congress (SWAYOCO) is a radical youth movement which was formed in 1991 by University and college students to protect the interests of the Swazi youth. Its main activities are publicised, weekly 'clean-up campaigns' in the urban townships and slums in which young boys led by the SWAYOCO picked up litter while dancing to political songs which call for an end to the Imbokodvo

regime. At the end of each 'clean-up campaign' the leaders hold a brief meeting in which they invariably condemn particular political leaders or the political system as illegal and corrupt. As the secretary-general of SWAYOCO put it, in addition to the literal cleansing of the townships, the other objective of the clean-up campaign is "the clearing the minds of the people who at this stage have not seen that the country has a problem because of being without proper leaders" (The Weekend Sun, 24 Jan. - 7 Feb. 1992, p.11).

The Swaziland Youth Congress, then, claims to be the "authentic voice for Swaziland's young people" (The Swazi Observer 11 Dec. 1991, p.4), and its leaders are daring young men who defy and reject the King's Decree of 1973 and subsequent laws which prohibit political meetings and demonstrations. As well, SWAYOCO leaders have often been in trouble with indigenous political leaders such as the chiefs who would not allow SWAYOCO members to pursue their political campaigns in the rural areas. However, SWAYOCO leaders have been a persistent menace to the Swazi rulers since the formation of the organization, and one prominent chief, for example, called for the detention without trial of all SWAYOCO and PUDEMO political activists (The Swazi Observer, 2 March 1992, p.1).

The other new radical association that questioned the legitimacy of the 'Swazi' political system is the Human Rights Association of Swaziland. Founded in 1991, HUMARAS claimed to be "a non-partisan organization that

served to promote the observance of human rights in Swaziland" (The Times of Swaziland Sunday, 22 Dec. 1991, p.15). Like the other organizations mentioned above, HUMARAS advocates political pluralism and has pressurized political leaders to revoke the Decree of 1973 and similar laws which violate the political rights of the Swazi. The main 'political' activity of HUMARAS has involved the provision of a social space for the new political activists, civil servants, trade unionists, and even some Members of Parliament who wish to express political dissent. Like PUDEMO, SWAYOCO, and the other parties mentioned above, HUMARAS, publicizes its meetings and seminars, and its opposition to the King's Decree of 1992 has been made abundantly clear.

Unlike some of the radical urban commoners of the 1960's and 1970's who mobilized mass support through the advocacy of Pan-African socialism in opposition to neo-colonialism, these new leaders articulated their rejection of the Swazi political regime through the idiom of human rights and democracy. Invariably all the above political groups and associations called for: the dissolution of the existing Parliament; the revocation of the 1973 Decree and other "repressive" legislation; and re-instatement of the Independence Constitution which provided for a democratically elected Parliament which would exercise real executive, legislative and judicial powers.

In this endeavour, the new groups - unlike the radical socialists of the 1970's - enjoyed the tacit support of the Western World. For example, on

December 10, 1991 HUMARAS organized the celebration of the United Nations Human Rights Day in Swaziland; and one of the speakers was the Deputy head of the American Embassy in Swaziland, Mr. Philip Jones, who emphasized that the American Government "will cut aid to Swaziland if there is evidence of the abuse of human rights" (The Times of Swaziland, 12 Dec. 1991, p.3).

However, the major criticism which has been levelled against the new radical parties and associations which rejected the king's government is that these organizations are elitist and opposed to Swazi tradition and the monarchy. In Chapter Five I will deal with this topic in detail, but here it is important to note that to most of the new radical leaders - as well as to many Swazi - it is the manipulation of Swazi kingship by the political elites which has been an issue of grave concern. In other words, many of the political activists and critics of the political system see their role as the restoration of the dignity of kingship by placing the chiefs and the king above partisan politics.

The second unique element about the 1991-1992 confrontation between the 'traditionalists' and the urban commoners was that the disenchantment with the Swazi political system was not only articulated by a few daring Swazi political activists, but was also expressed in various ways by Swazi representing a wider variety of social groups and institutions such as Members of Parliament, civil servants, teachers, women, conservative Swazi, churches and the local press.

Given the fact that political meetings are banned in Swaziland, the local press provided the medium for the dissemination of critical opinions by these different social groups. The press, through its conscientious coverage of illegal political meetings and political events, critical reporting, letters to the editor, and editorial comments, played a vital role in uncovering the conflict between the aristocrats and the urban commoners. In fact, two new bi-weekly newspapers, namely The Weekend Sun and The Independent Review were established in 1991. These new newspapers supplement the state-controlled newspaper, The Swazi Observer, and the oldest and best-selling independent newspaper, The Times of Swaziland. In general the local press, especially the two new newspapers and The Times of Swaziland, is very critical of the Tinkhundla system of government.

For example, in his response to criticism that the press sides with the opponents of the state, the publisher of The Times of Swaziland argued that his newspaper served both as a vital safety valve as well as a serious forum for the articulation of opinions in the absence of a democratically elected parliament:

Normally if you have a Member of Parliament responsible for your area you can complain to him and if he wishes to be re-elected he will do something about your complaint. That's accountability. That can't work here because no M.P is responsible for your area (The Times of Swaziland, 10 April 1992, p. 5).

Thus many of the concerns about the legitimacy and the dysfunctional role of the Swazi political system were given front-page coverage by the press. For example, in January 1992 the Deputy Speaker of the House of Assembly in the Swazi Parliament described the Tinkhundla Government as undemocratic, and claimed that the state was controlled by "a certain clique" dubbed the Central Committee, or the king's ungazetted, secret advisers who manipulate the monarchy for their own selfish ends (The Times of Swaziland Sunday, 26 Jan. 1992, p.1). The supposed members of the Central Committee included the chief architects of the king's political party which has retained state power since Independence (The Times of Swaziland Sunday, 26 Jan. 1992, p.2). Such news seemed to give covert support to claims by political activists that the present regime serves the interests of the aristocrats or the king's political party. This negative portrayal of the state can also be discerned in the criticism of its authoritarian rule by teachers and church leaders. For example, in February 1991 the Swaziland National Association of Teachers (SNAT) issued a statement in which it strongly criticized Swazi political leaders for the "indiscriminate use of force" in an effort to quell political dissent. This statement referred to the November 14, 1990 invasion of the University of Swaziland by the paramilitary police in order to end a student boycott of classes. The students had gone on strike to protest the dismissal from the university of a fellow student who had recently been detained and charged with High Treason

for holding an illegal meeting. Criticizing the political leaders in terms of Swazi norms and values, the secretary-general of SNAT reminded the political elites that "Swaziland's cherished methodology of resolving matters is dialogue, discussion and negotiation" (The Swazi Observer, 19 Feb. 1991, p.3).

Like the teachers, some influential church leaders condemned the authoritarian and self-serving attitudes of Swazi political leaders. For instance, at an interdenominational worship service held at the Roman Catholic Cathedral to pray for peace in neighbouring Mozambique, the Anglican and Catholic Church leaders accused African politicians of spending public funds on weapons instead of allocating national wealth to developmental projects (The Times of Swaziland Sunday, 1 Dec. 1991, p.1). A similar concern was expressed by a Lutheran bishop at another inter-denominational church service called the Prince of Peace for Southern Africa Commemoration Service. The bishop lamented the fact that "corruption is rife in government" and pleaded with all Swazi to recognize the value of healthy competition in all aspects of social life (The Times of Swaziland, 17 Dec. 1991, p.1).

It is important to note that these covert criticisms were given front page coverage by the media, and they seemed to challenge the unwritten policy of the Swazi leaders to appoint aristocrats to the highest political positions in the country. This policy was justified by one prominent prince on the basis of the Swazi doctrine of divine kingship, namely that Swazi leaders will

always be selected from the Dlamini royal clan because the "Dlamini are closer to God" (The Times of Swaziland, 25 Nov. 1991, p.29). This comment was cited by many Swazi in different contexts as evidence that the Swazi royal house was determined to deny the commoners their political rights. As one leading political activist put it:

What kind of human rights can we enjoy in a country where the authorities firmly believe that more than anybody else they are closer to 'God'? . . . He surely cannot be equated with the God of Heaven before whom all people are equal regardless of their status in life (The Times of Swaziland, 12 Dec. 1991, p. 24).

This lack of confidence in Swazi political leaders and the government in general prevailed even among the conservative Swazi who live in the rural villages. First, the problem of the prolonged drought that affected Southern Africa in 1991-92 was interpreted by some as a form of ancestral punishment for turning away from Swazi customs. Although the new radical organizations that challenged the monarchy were held culpable (The Swazi Observer, 2 March 1992, p.1), some elderly Swazi blamed the royal leaders for the drought because they too - the political leaders - have deviated from tradition. According to one woman member of the royal house, the behaviour of the queens, for example, does not befit the decorum of future "Mothers of the Nation". This woman gave the example of a recent public address by one queen, and

maintained that such persons cannot address the Swazi nation directly, but can only do so through appointed spokesmen (Interview, March 11, 1992).

Other conservative Swazi, especially traditional healers and medicine-men, also blamed the royal house for the drought since the king had failed to conduct rain-making rituals. That the monarchy took this allegation seriously became evident in February 1992 when the king, addressing the Swazi at the Ludzidzini Royal Residence, assured the nation that the umndumezulu or the rain-making ritual would be performed, and gave directions regarding the role of the chiefs in the ceremony.

The second challenge to the Swazi leaders from conservative Swazi concerned the latter's apparent lack of faith in the judiciary. A case in point was the outbreak of mob violence in rural areas in 1991. A typical example concerned the revenge killing of a murder suspect following the death of a four-year old girl who was allegedly killed for ritual purposes (The Times of Swaziland, 3 Dec. 1991, p.1, 24). As Marwick noted in 1940, Swazi leaders strongly condemn the practice of ritual murder, and a case of this nature is normally handled by the modern courts of law (cf. Marwick 1940 [1966]:205). By tradition, on the other hand, the case could be tried by the local chief, and in some cases a witch-hunting ritual would be conducted to determine the guilt or innocence of the suspect. But in this particular incident, about forty villagers took the law into their own hands and stoned the suspect to death. This new

style of mob justice came to known as "Mbayiyanism", named after the victim, Mr. Mbayiyane Mnisi.

This event was interpreted in various ways. To some it signified a state of social unrest (The Times of Swaziland, 8 Dec. 1991, p.3). To others this killing was a form of mob justice that was preferable to the current official system of justice (The Independent Review, January 31-February 13, 1992). But for many Swazi this event marked a turning point in the history of normally predictable Swazi behaviour: namely, the shift from a peace-loving and loyal people to an assertive, and even violent mob who defied normal channels of conflict resolution. Thus some of the opponents of the state gave a political interpretation of this incident, reading it as a "lesson that when people decide that enough is enough, the rule-book will be left out" (The Times of Swaziland Sunday, 15 Dec. 1991, p.16).

However, in spite of the numerous criticisms of the entire Swazi Government and political leaders noted above, the response of the aristocrats was firm and consistent. With the exception of a few 'concessions' such as laxity in the prosecution of political activists for holding illegal meetings, the aristocrats - namely the king, his councillors, the senior princes and the chiefs - reiterated the same argument advanced twenty years earlier in 1973, namely, that the multiparty democracy imposed by the British on the Swazi is an alien, divisive custom that is incompatible with the political structure and peaceful

Swazi way of life (Matsebula 1987:258-59). This being the case, the argument goes, the Swazi need to revert to their own system of government which is more representative and open to all Swazi. More importantly, this 'traditional' form of government is said to be conducive to peace, political stability, economic progress, and happiness for all (Matsebula 1987:258-59).

This position was reaffirmed by the king in his Speech from the Throne marking the official opening of the 1992 session of the Parliament of the Kingdom of Swaziland. King Mswati III urged the nation to support the efforts to reform the Tinkhundla Government, and also warned the people against "the irrational compulsion for immediate change" which has led to violence and suffering in many countries:

As we review the catalogue of misery and suffering encountered in all areas of the world, I believe we should thank God for the blessing of peace which our kingdom has enjoyed for so long... For it is only in an atmosphere of peace that a stable economy, as the basis of a secure future as an independent nation, can thrive and grow (The Weekend Sun, 24 Feb. - 6 March 1992, p.2).

This strongly negative attitude towards multi-party democracy is not only maintained through appeals to cultural heritage and material well-being, but is enforced through royal directives and decrees. First, neither the decree banning party-politics nor the hated 60-Days Detention Order was revoked. Second, another decree was issued by the king, called the Tinkhundla Review Commission Decree of 1992. By this decree, the king appointed the Tinkhundla

Review Commission, a body made up of eleven men and one woman entrusted with the task of receiving individual submissions from Swazi citizens regarding ways and means by which the Tinkhundla system could be improved. The commissioners would then make recommendations about how to "promote and sustain the democratic process in Swaziland" (Tinkhundla Review Decree, 1992). This decree, then, assumes that the non-party style of government is democratic in spite of the protestations by all the new political parties and associations mentioned above. In fact, an attempt was made to co-opt two leading advocates of the new organizations to serve on the Tinkhundla Review Commission. One of these individuals was the president of the Human Rights Association of Swaziland, and the other, the organizing secretary of the People's United Democratic Movement.

Significantly, the first announcement about the impending appointment of the Tinkhundla Review Commission was made to the emabutfo or the king's regiments who had participated in the Incwala of 1991-92. To the monarchy, then, "the people" are the emabutfo or the national regiments who gather at the Engabezweni Royal Kraal to bid the king farewell following the successful completion of the Incwala and the harvesting of the king's fields. Thus when the king announced the news about the forthcoming Tinkhundla Review Commission he was applauded by the regiments through the thunderous acclamation, BAYETHE!WENA WAPHAKATHI! (Your Majesty! You

of the Inner House!). This acclamation was followed by whistling, praise poetry for the king, and dancing.

Thus in the conflictual context of contemporary Swaziland, participation in royal rituals signifies assent to the prevailing ideology of the aristocrats. The participants at the Incwala, then, tend to see themselves - and are considered by many - as the defenders of the absolute monarch. Therefore, in contrast to suggestions made in earlier anthropological studies of the Incwala, participants in this ritual can no longer be considered as a group which represents "a single national identity . . . which cut across boundaries of kinship, locality, and occupation" (Kuper 1986a:136). I now give a brief review of existing literature on the Incwala.

Anthropological Studies of the Incwala

The Incwala has been a favourite subject of study for many anthropologists since the 1930's¹. The earlier studies by P.A.W. Cook (1930) and B.A. Marwick (1940 [1966]) interpreted the ritual primarily as an agricultural ceremony commemorating the First Fruits of the annual harvest (Cook 1930:205-210; Marwick 1940 [1966]:183). Later studies by Kuper (1944; 1947a) and Gluckman (1954) emphasized the socio-political role of the Incwala.

The general tendency of most scholars, however, has been to interpret the Incwala in structural-functionalist terms. To Kuper, the Incwala

signified the continuing vitality of "a distinctive Swazi culture and the persistence of a social structure centred in Swazi kingship" (1972:593-4). As well, the Incwala was presented as an indigenous unifying force (Kuper 1944, 1947a; Gluckman 1954; Lincoln 1987) that signified the triumph of primordial institutions and values over Western influences engendered by colonial rule and missionary teachings (Kuper 1972a, 1973a, 1973b).

In her earlier works, Kuper interpreted the ritual strictly as a ritual of kingship (1944:256). She maintained that "the Incwala unites the people under the king" and that it also dramatized the balance of power between the king and his rivals within the royalty, on the one hand, and between the monarchy and the commoners, on the other hand (1944:256). This being the case, the Incwala served to reinforce existing social hierarchies (1947a:175), and helped resolve the tension between the monarchy and commoners (1944:256).

A similar functionalist interpretation of the ritual was given by Max Gluckman (1954). Focusing on the ceremonial "hate songs" and "insults" - the "rites of rebellion" - directed toward the king, Gluckman observed that the latent function of the insults hurled at the king during the Incwala served as a catharsis or safety valve that harmonized the social conflict between the monarchy and the commoners, and conflicts among the members of the royal clan (1954:125). He maintained that during the course of the ritual "the unity of the nation is affirmed triumphantly" (1965:254).

These analyses portrayed the indigenous Swazi social structure as a stable, well coordinated system which conditioned and determined the behaviour and obligations of individuals and groups. This functionalist perspective gave rise to a simplistic explanation of class or group conflicts in Swazi society. For example, when serious conflicts emerged between the monarchy and the commoners, these were explained away in terms of the "disintegration of an established order" (Kuper 1947:7) or in terms of foreign influence (Kuper 1986a:77).

This explanation presents an idealized view of both the Incwala and Swazi kingship, in which the political goals and interests of the monarchy are identified with those of the commoners. As I have indicated above, to many urban Swazi, the monarchy and the Incwala represent an ideology that is inimical to the aspirations and political actions of some Swazi who seek to replace the present monarchical rule with a more democratic form of government.

The functionalist interpretations of the Incwala have been supplemented by structuralist or essentialist analyses of the symbolism of the ritual, including analyses of the motivations for participation in the ritual (Beidelman 1966; Kuper 1972a; 1978a; 1978b). In his insightful analysis of the meaning of the Swazi divine kingship as dramatized at the Incwala ceremony, Beidelman, for instance, studied the Incwala from the point of view of Swazi

indigenous cosmology to show that the main theme of the Incwala was not simply to dramatize social tensions as Gluckman claims, but to emphasize the impartial and non-partisan nature of sacred kingship (1966:373-405). He correctly emphasizes that the hate songs, and the dramatized isolation and separation of the king from his kinsmen signify the non-alignment of the king as befits his office. Beidelman maintains that one of the main themes of the Incwala is that the "king's ties to his royal kin are minimized" (1966:404).

This perspective was developed by Kuper who contends that the main motivating force of the Incwala ritual was the "myth of Swazi kingship", which entailed belief in "the unique power of hereditary kingship" (1972:593). For Kuper, the vitality of the doctrine of divine kingship was further enhanced by the personal charisma and popularity of King Sobhuza II who had "become a legend in his lifetime" (1978a:345). According to Kuper, King Sobhuza's attributes included his kindness, generosity, altruism, wisdom, humility, respect for others, and his role as the peoples' mouthpiece (1978a:345).

Thus in her "processual" studies of the Incwala and Swazi kingship, Kuper identifies the Incwala with Swazi cultural identity and nationalism (1972:608-609). For example, during the Incwala of 1968, the year of Independence, many Swazi who been discouraged by missionaries from participating in the Incwala began to participate, thus demonstrating their "national identity with Sobhuza in the subtle language of dress and participation

in Swazi customs" (Kuper 1978a:231). Kuper further shows that after independence Swaziland witnessed a wider range of Swazi participants at the Incwala, including the "new elite", the "Westernized" Swazi and Mission Christians (1972:608).

Like the functionalist interpretations mentioned above, structuralist analyses have tended to over-emphasize the influence of religious and nationalist ideology on Swazi behaviour. These accounts ignore the growing sense of conflict between the monarchy and urban commoners as well as the crisis of legitimacy on the part of the absolute monarch in post-colonial Swaziland. This conflict, as I show below, is reflected and expressed at the Incwala ritual. For example, participation in the Incwala is now interpreted by many urban Swazi as a token of political alliance with the aristocrats. As a result, for many Swazi youth, Swazi kingship and the Incwala are perceived as part of a parochial and repressive ideology which represents the interests of the aristocrats. In other words, today the Incwala ritual is seen by some Swazi as potentially divisive, and it alienates those Swazi who are disenchanted with the current 'traditionalist' political system.

The existing analyses of the Incwala, then, are rooted in a methodology and political discourse that are no longer appropriate for contemporary Swazi society. Swazi "tradition" is currently not seen in impartial, neutral terms. During my fieldwork, for example, I was struck by the

unprecedented, widespread criticism of, and cynical attitudes toward 'traditional' practices such as the Liqoqo or the king's inner council, and the Tinkhundla or the 'traditional' non-party system of government which was instituted by King Sobhuza II in 1978 to replace the liberal Independence Constitution which provided for multi-party politics. The critics comprised an eclectic assortment of urban commoners who displayed their dissatisfaction with the 'traditionalist' ideology through the local press, trade unions, new political parties and associations, as well as through public demonstrations. Indeed the social climate of my field research was characterized by debates, polemics, and even disguised political campaigns revolving around the merits or weaknesses of the 'traditional' system of government.

There is a need, therefore, for an interpretive account of the contemporary Incwala that takes cognizance of the "double dialectic" of this royal ritual. First, the Incwala ceremony can be seen as a re-affirmation of Swazi cultural identity in the face of the forces of modernization; and second, it can be interpreted as a public affirmation of the legitimacy of the absolute monarchy at a time when the legality of absolute monarchy is questioned by urban-based radical organizations such as the People's United Democratic Movement (PUDEMO), the Swaziland Youth Congress (SWAYOCO), and the Human Rights Association of Swaziland (HUMARAS).

In what follows I present a condensed description of the Incwala as a national ritual that reflects the double dialectic outlined above. I pay particular attention to the current meaning of kuhlehla or tribute labour to the monarchy as the point of departure in the description and analyses of the different meanings of the Incwala to various sections of the Swazi population.

The Incwala of 1991-92

The Incwala can be described as the main indigenous ceremony that affirms and embodies the key symbols of Swazi culture, namely, bukhosi or kingship, bemanti or the national priests, and emabutfo or the national regiments². Following Ortner, I use the concept of "key symbols" to denote sacralized ideas, objects or actions such as the flag or the cross which represent in a condensed form meanings salient within a particular culture (Ortner 1979:94).

Indeed the Incwala is itself one of the key symbols of Swazi culture. Compared with other indigenous Swazi rituals such as the umhlanga or the Reed Dance, the Incwala is regarded as "the most mystic and sacred" (Swaziland Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Tourism, 1990: 132). In fact, since the decolonization era in the early 1960's, the Incwala - like the office of kingship, the emabutfo or regiments, and the libandla or the Swazi National Council - have been officially designated as the indigenous institutions which lie

beyond the legislative or administrative jurisdiction of the modern Swazi Government (Kuper 1978a:137).

The date and sequence of events of the Incwala are set according to the lunar calendar in consultation with the religious specialists. Normally the Incwala is held during the moons of Lweti (November), Inkhosi Lencane (December) and Inkhosi Lenkhulu (January). Its timing and performances coincide with seasonal and yet sacralized events such as the summer solstice, the waning and waxing of the moon, and the inauguration of the summer harvest and the new year (cf. Kuper 1944:234, 245ff).

In December 1991, the sacrosanct quality of the Incwala and the inextricable identification of the ritual with the king were described by the Swazi historian, Dr. J.S.M Matsebula, as follows:

The Ncwala is a thanksgiving ceremony ... We offer our thanks to Him in our own way, undiluted by foreign influences and cultures. We beseech God to continue giving us His protection, guidance and blessing in the new year more. In our religion the national supplication to God is done through our king who is our national life and the symbol of the corporate unity of the Swazi" (The Times of Swaziland, 18 Dec. 1991, p.28).

It is fitting, therefore, that the main day of the Incwala ceremony, which marks the beginning of the new year, is declared a public holiday in Swaziland. All business enterprises, save essential services and major industrial companies, have to close to enable their employees to participate in the

ceremony. In 1991, the Incwala became a burden to many shop owners since the main day of the Incwala, that is December 23, clashed with the pre-Christmas shopping rush, especially because the holiday was announced with less than a week's advance notice (The Swazi Observer, 20 Dec. 1991, p.1)³. Nonetheless many employers, especially the major industries, permit some of their employees to participate in the ceremony "on behalf of all those who remained at the place of work" (Dodds, Executive Director, Federation of Swazi Employers, Seminar Paper, "Attendance at Royal Ceremonies and Absence From the Workplace", February 14, 1991.)

The basic intent of the Incwala, then, is to affirm the king as the primary symbol of Swazi culture and society. As Kuper observed in 1944, the Incwala is "a drama of kingship" in which the hereditary King is ritually strengthened, rejuvenated, and fortified by his subjects at the royal capital village (Kuper 1944:255; cf. 1972:614). Every Incwala ceremony, therefore, is intimately linked to a particular king, and there can be no Incwala during the minority or the death of the king (Kuper 1944:255). Thus the Incwala of 1991-92 was the fifth Incwala of King Mswati III since his coronation in 1986.

Since the king is the embodiment of the Swazi nation, the Incwala requires the active participation of all Swazi. As a rule, every Swazi has to 'dance the Incwala' and he or she is expected to wear the Incwala costume. The popular exclamation during the Incwala ceremony is: Incwala ayibukelwa!

or You do not watch others, You dance the Incwala! (cf. Kuper 1972a:614; Matsebula 1987:331).

Thus different social groups and classes participate in the ceremony, and these include the aristocrats, commoners, bemanti or the Sea-water National Priests, Christians, boys and unmarried young men, and the lutsango or the married women's regiment (Kuper 1972a:593-614). However, women do not play a significant role in the Incwala. In fact, with the notable exception of the main day of the Incwala where the ordinary woman is represented by the lutsango women's regiment, the rest of the Incwala includes only a few women from the royal house such as the queen mother, the queens, and the princesses.

To a large extent, the meaning of every Incwala is shaped by the degree of the people's participation in the ritual. As Kuper and Lincoln have shown, particular political crises have tended to heighten Swazi enthusiasm for the Incwala. Lincoln, for example, links the politics of the colonial Incwala to the general mobilization of nationalistic sentiments against British rule which had relegated the king to a Paramount chief (Lincoln 1987:132-56). Kuper, on the other hand, discusses the changing roles of the Incwala in different phases of Swazi history from colonial through post-colonial Swaziland (Kuper 1972a:593-615; cf. 1978a:231).

Significantly, Kuper describes how the Incwala could be used both to signify exclusion and inclusion into the 'traditionalist' camp. For instance, during the decolonization period, Swazi who identified themselves with King Sobhuza's political ideology demonstrated their position through participation in the Incwala, and these Swazi included persons "who had never taken part in the Incwala because it had been prohibited by the churches to which they had belonged" (1978a:231). On the other hand, some princesses were prevented from participation in the Incwala of 1964 because of their association with Prince Dumisa, the radical prince who was one of the key leaders of the Ngwane National Liberatory Congress, the main political party that was perceived as a threat to the survival of the Swazi monarchy (Kuper 1978a:262).

Likewise, the dialectical role of the Incwala of 1991-92 can be described from the point of view of the meaning of participation to the participants themselves as well as to the observers or the non-participants. I now describe the Incwala showing how in the prevailing conflictual climate of the early 1990's the Incwala was perceived as a symbol of political polarization between the traditionalists and the disenchanted urban commoners.

The Setting

The main activities of the Incwala take place at Ludzidzini royal residence, a site that is rich with secular and sacred symbolism. This royal

residence is the Umphakatsi or "the centre" of the nation in the sense that it is the ritual and an administrative capital of the Kingdom of Swaziland. There are several symbolic persons and objects which help create the sense of an axis mundi about this residence, that is, a space that Eliade would describe as "the meeting point of heaven, earth and hell" (Eliade 1954:12).

The first significant symbol at Ludzizdzini is the residence of the Indlovukati (the queen mother). As I pointed out in Chapter One, the Indlovukati is "the Mother of the Nation", and her residence, like that of any other conservative Swazi homestead, constitutes the ultimate venue for the holding of crucial family meetings (Kuper 1972b:420). The portrayal of Swaziland as one family that should resolve its disagreements peacefully constituted one of the key themes of King Mswati's speech during his Birthday Celebration in April 1992. Referring to the political conflict over constitutional reform in the country, King Mswati III urged his people to resolve disagreements "in a family atmosphere instead of resorting to arms" (The Times of Swaziland Sunday, 26 April 1992, p.2).

As well, the Indlovukati is custodian of the indlunkhulu or the sacred shrine dedicated to the spirits of former kings (Kuper 1972b:417). As the guardian of national rituals the Indlovukati officiates in all national rites, and her role is most prominent during the umhlanga or annual Reed Dance for teenage girls, and more recently, the Easter ritual.

Secondly, the Indlovukati shares her residence with the emakhosikati or the wives of the king. Some queens were "ritual wives", that is, girls selected from the Matsebula and Motsa clans to serve as "the first wives" of the king following his coronation. As Kuper notes, the choice of the Matsebula and Motsa is linked to the historical contributions of these clans towards the ritual strengthening of the monarchy, that is, by providing "sacred and powerful medicines to the Dlamini rulers" (Kuper 1978a:61-62). This being the case, these queens are essentially "ritual partners and the protectors of kingship [in general] rather than any individual king" (Kuper 1978a:61); and each queen is treated with great respect as "a mother of the nation" (Kuper 1978a:61-62).

The houses of the queen mother and the queens - which are modern thatch-roofed roundavells with all the basic amenities such as running water and electricity - are surrounded by houses for the Indvuna or governor of Ludzidzini, several prominent princes, and some commoners. The residence of the governor constitutes the gate-way to the Ludzidzini residence, and the governor is the chief liaison officer between the royalty and the people. All announcements pertaining to significant national ceremonies or traditional meetings are made by the Indvuna of Ludzudzini.

Thirdly, in addition to the sacred shrine called the indlunkhulu, the Ludzidzini boasts the sibaya or the cattle byre. The sibaya is the arena for secular and sacred activities. Its sacred allusions concern the link between

every cattle byre and family ancestors. Like every conservative Swazi who normally addresses his own ancestors at his respective cattle byre, the nation remembers and honours royal ancestors inside the sibaya (Kuper 1972b:418). As a result, the Incwala is danced inside the sibaya, and during the ceremony every Swazi who enters the sibaya must dance to the sacred songs of the Incwala. More importantly, inside the sibaya there is the inhlambelo, a temporary sacred enclosure that is constructed during the Incwala to serve as the site for the ritual purification and strengthening of the king by the bemanti or the National Priests (cf. Kuper 1944:237).

As an administrative centre, the sibaya is the venue for major political and executive meetings. These meetings include the king's annual address, impromptu meetings, and royal decrees. The format of the meetings held inside the sibaya is intentionally 'traditional'. Everyone, including the king, sits on the ground; and the proceedings of the meetings preclude debate or political dissent. Even the agenda for each meeting remains unknown to the general public, yet it is in such meetings that new royal directives and decrees are issued. For example, it was in the sibaya that the king formerly issued the Tinkhundla Review Commission Decree of 1992. In fact, all the previous decrees were first issued in the sibaya (cf. Matsebula 1987:262).

The fourth set of powerful symbols that presents the royal residence as the microcosm of the Swazi world is the emalawu or the barracks for the

emabutfo (national regiments). As Kuper notes, these emalawu are strategically situated at the main entrance to the royal residence to defend bukhosi or kingship (1972b:417). The Emalawu are the traditional-style circular, bee-hive huts whose floors are 'cemented' with cowdung. Like typical traditional huts, the emalawu are made of wood, mud and thatched grass. But unlike the houses of the queen mother, the queens, and some senior princes which have modern facilities like running water, electricity and furniture, these traditional barracks have none of the above amenities.

Although the regiments occupy the emalawu only on ceremonial occasions, the emalawu symbolize the permanent regimental support for kingship. Frequently, the regiments are summoned to perform various chores for the monarchy, including providing emotional and moral support for the king during modern celebrations such as the Independence Anniversary, the Army Day, and the King's Birthday. During the Incwala, the emabutfo are often 'rewarded' with some food rations consisting of meat, traditional beer, and soft-porridge. Indeed the constant presence of the emabutfo in or around the royal residence also heightens the sense of group solidarity and nationalist sentiments among the participants from the various regions of the country.

A fifth reason for the symbolic centrality of the Ludzidzini royal residence is its location in the central region of Swaziland, an area which boasts other prominent artifacts and establishments which are intended to

identify Swazi nationalism exclusively with kingship. These national artifacts and establishments, which are located within walking distance from the Ludzidzini, include two Swazi National Schools, the Swazi National Church, the Enkhanini Swazi National Council Offices, Swaziland National Archives, The National Museum, Somhlolo National Stadium, the Parliament building, Lozitha Palace (the king's residence), as well as Tibiyo TakaNgwane and Tisuka TakaNgwane (parastatal organizations controlled by the monarchy on behalf of the people).

Thus the non-verbal symbolism of the Ludzidzini royal village and the surrounding institutions conveys the message that bukhosi or Swazi kingship is a traditional and immutable symbol of Swazi culture. This sense of permanence and transcendence is also accentuated by the timing and sequence of the Incwala which coincides with natural (yet mystical) phenomena such as movements of the sun, moon, the sea, rivers, and rainfall. As a result the ritual is performed with great attention to detail.

The Sequence of Events

The time frame of the entire Incwala spans a period of about two lunar months (November and December), and the performances can be subdivided into five sections. First, the Incwala begins when the bemanti (people of the water) or the National Priests leave the Ludzidzini ritual capital for the Indian Ocean in neighbouring Mozambique and the main rivers in

Swaziland to fetch sea and river water, and other medicines for the ritual strengthening and protection of the king. Prior to their departure, the National Priests perform several private rituals including the killing of a black ox whose skin and tail are used to decorate and distinguish the calabashes known as emakhosatana or princesses from ordinary water calabashes. The departure of the Priests must be 'witnessed' by ancestors in the indlunkhulu or sacred hut, and by the members of the royal residence gathered in the sibaya or cattle byre (Kuper 1944:232-34).

The National Priests perform an essential role in the Incwala by "treating the king with fortifying ingredients and ancient medicines" (Kuper 1978a:65). As I noted in Chapter Two, the ruling Dlamini clan justifies its political position partly by asserting its religio-magical supremacy over the other Swazi clans (cf. Bonner 1983:87). Thus one of the crucial roles of the National Priests is to reinforce this doctrine of sacred kingship. In fact, for Kuper, "The basic ideology validating the Ncwala is the unique power of hereditary kingship" (1972b:592).

In turn, the Swazi monarchy accords prominent social status to the National Priests, who rank second only to the king during the Incwala ceremony. As Kuper observes, the social hierarchy at the Incwala begins with the king, followed by the Priests, then princes, and finally the commoners (1973b:615). The social esteem of the National Priests is demonstrated by their

authority as they journey to and from the sea coast near Maputo in Mozambique. The Priests enjoy the license to behave somewhat arrogantly towards people they happen to come across. This behaviour, known as kuhlamahlama, involves imposing 'fines' or demanding gifts of money and food from the people. In response, the people concede, and by so doing they contribute towards the success of the Incwala.

As the leading ritual specialists, then, the National Priests also enforce the observation of taboos during this sacred period. As Kuper points out, the success of the Incwala depends on correct timing and appropriate behaviour. Any deviant behaviour during the Incwaia can hurt or soil the entire nation (1944:252). Even the king has to observe certain taboos, one of which is the that he "is in seclusion", and cannot handle administrative issues until the entire ritual is over (Kuper 1972a:604).

The Small Incwala

The second phase of the ritual is called the Small Incwala, and it begins with the return of the bemanti or National Priests to the royal capital. They bring with them the sacred waters and medicines of kingship. The return of the bemanti is timed to coincide with the summer solstice in December; and ideally the summer solstice should also coincide with the waning of the moon (Kuper 1944:234). More importantly, the return of the bemanti marks the official

beginning of the Incwala dances, and gives license to the regiments to sing and dance to the sacred songs of the Incwala (Kuper 1944:236).

Prior to the beginning of the Small Incwala, a public summons is made over the radio by the Indvuna or the governor of Ludzidzini calling on the emabutfo to report at the royal capital. Although the radio announcement does not make any specific reference to the Incwala, the emabutfo infer from the timing (December) that the royal call is for the official commencement of the Incwala ceremony. Thus thousands of the emabutfo converge at the Ludzidzini royal residence already dressed in semi-incwala attire.

The colourful costume for the regiments is as follows: white and black feathers pinned into the hair; a cloak made of cattle-tails hanging from the shoulders to the waist; flowing tails that are tied to the right arm, loin covering made from the pelt of the skin of a leopard or antelope; a selected mahiya or woven cloth tied around the waist; and a war-shield made of ox-hides and plain sticks. Considering the different colours for the cattle-hides, bird-feathers, wild animals, and cattle tails, the costume of the emabutfo make an impressive as well as awesome sight; and the costume itself marks the public identity of the emabutfo during the entire Incwala season.

Yet the most emotionally engaging ritual actions of the Small Incwala that strengthen the solidarity the emabutfo are the sacred songs and dances that mark the start of the Incwala. These songs include the "hate songs" and

the Inqabakanqomfula. The "hate songs" (cf. Gluckman 1954:125-26) are actually mournful melodies that describe the king as an object of hate. The leading song is called the "hand song" in which the regiments dance with the right hand free for making rhythmic gestures. This song laments the fact that the king is hated by the people (cf. Kuper 1944:236).

While the words of the song are meaningful in themselves, the emotional appeal of the "hand song" lies in its style: namely, the slow, repetitious, inaudible song that is accompanied by equally slow, and dignified rhythmic dances. As the regiments dance to this melody repeatedly, the sense of empathy for the king is accentuated, and as Beidelman correctly observed, the king becomes an object of pity rather than an object of hate and envy (1966:373-405).

The Inqabakanqomfula, on the other hand, is more historical. It recounts the exploits of the Swazi kings, with emphasis on the mystery and invincibility of Swazi kingship (Kuper 1944:238). Hence the general motto of the Kingdom of Swaziland is: SIYINQABA or "We are Invincible/Mysterious". Although the Inqabakanqomfula is not a taboo outside the Incwala context, it is only sung by the emabutfo during other national celebrations such as Independence Day. Like the other sacred songs of the Incwala, the Inqabakanqomfula derives its appeal from its ritual context and its link with 'time immemorial'.

Following the formal opening of the Small Incwala, everyday in the afternoon, a small group of regiments gather at the Ludzidzini royal residence to "rehearse" for the Big Incwala. This practice involves singing and dancing to the sacred songs of the Incwala. This session takes place outside the sibaya or cattle byre, and it is presided over by the Indlovukati who is frequently accompanied by her assistants, a few princesses and some prominent princes and councillors.

As the days of the Big Incwala draw nearer, more regiments participate in the Incwala "practice". In general, however, the main regiments which participate on a regular basis during this interim period include well known royal councillors, senior princes, security personnel, and some cabinet ministers. Nonetheless this session is open to all and it ensures the persistence of the aura of sacredness that pervades the royal village during the Incwala season.

The Big Incwala

The third section of the Incwala is known as the Big Incwala and it attracts thousands of emabutfo. There are four main separate rites that are performed during the Big Incwala, namely: young men fetching the lusekwane or the sacred shrub used for covering the king's sacred enclosure; killing of the

inkunzi or the black bull; the luma or biting of the first fruits by the king on the main day; and the lukhuni or the fire rite.

The rite of the fetching of the lusekwane is the preserve of boys and teenagers. The lusekwane is an evergreen tree which grows at Enhlambeni, a round-trip journey of about seventy kilometres from the Ludzidzini royal residence. Every year during the Incwala, the governor of the royal residence summons boys and young unmarried men the Ludzidzini royal residence where the king officially commissions them to go and fetch branches of the lusekwane which are used to cover the sacred enclosure in which the king is ritually strengthened.

This is a one-day trip which promotes loyalty to kingship. By participating in the rite, the young men are encouraged to respond to royal summonses to perform tribute labour for the king. For example, they are made to endure certain forms of hardships such as travelling a distance of more than thirty kilometres on foot, walking in the rain, feeding themselves, and sleeping outdoors. On their trip they wear indigenous attire and sing the Incwala songs that describe the king as a toddler and themselves as nannies. Invariably, it is these boys who constitute the future loyal regiments of the king, and the older boys are subsequently inducted into the emabutfo.

Upon their return, the lusekwane boys deposit the lusekwane inside the sibaya and their return is usually graced by rainfall - which is a sign of

ancestral blessing. But the next significant rite for the boys is the killing of the black bull with their bare hands. The black bull is used as a sacrifice, and various parts of its body parts are used in the complex and prolonged process of strengthening the king inside the sacred enclosure. Since the killing of the bull requires not only skill but physical strength, carefully selected youths perform this rite, and in 1991 these consisted mainly of young army officers.

The third vital rite of the Big Incwala is the Luma session or "the biting" rite in which the king bites the green foods of the new summer season. This rite marks the official beginning of the summer harvest and the king inaugurates it on behalf of the regiments. Later on the same day, the king performs another rite with a wild green gourd called liselwa lwembo or the Gourd of Embo. This gourd had been picked and preserved for the whole year to be used during the Incwala. The gourd symbolizes the permanence and continuity of the ruling clan which traces its origin from a place called Embo in Mozambique (Kuper 1986a:75).

During this scene, the king is deserted by the royalty and is left with the commoners who affirm their loyalty by singing and dancing to an animated song calling him "the King of Kings". As the royal regiments leave the cattle byre the commoners shout: Akaphume ematfonga! Ngeyefu leNkhosi! or "Out you royals! This is our King!" . The king then prepares to throw the sacred gourd towards his regiments and one of the regiment members has to catch it

with his shield before it touches the ground. But the recipient of the sacred gourd must be treated by medicine men lest he dies or go insane from the mystical power of the gourd of kingship.

Generally, the rites of the main day highlight the acquiescence of all Swazi to monarchical rule. On this day more people converge into the cattle byre, and every Swazi who enters the kraal dressed in Western clothing is given a stick by the ushers so that he too can dance the Incwala. Those Swazi wearing Western clothes include a few church leaders from mission churches who look rather awkward dancing the Incwala wearing Western suits. This group is derogatorily dubbed Libutfo Labokhololo or "the regiment of those who wear the white collar", and during the dances these participants are pushed towards the back as "the real regiments" occupy the first two rows of the troupe. But some church leaders belonging to independent churches participate in the Incwala wearing their clerical gowns, and these leaders are placed in positions of honour next to the sacred enclosure in which the king is ritually strengthened and rejuvenated.

The fourth important rite of the Big Incwala is called the Lukhuni or the fire rite in which the king sets alight a big fire made of firewood that had been collected by the emabutfo. The purpose of the wooden pyre is to burn the remains of the ritual objects that had been used during the ritual. These ritual

objects include parts of the bull, the green gourd, and some blankets used by the king in the previous year.

At this stage the sacred Incwala songs are no longer sung until the next year. To signify the transition from the old to the new year, the king makes the fire by the indigenous art of causing friction between specially selected sticks. This fire is put out by rainfall, and by tradition, the rain symbolizes ancestral blessings for the coming year. As well, the rain is evidence of the sacred power of the ruling monarch.

Imfabantfu or the Weeding of the Royal Fields

While the Lukhuni rite signifies the end of the more dramatic sessions of the Incwala, for most of the regular regiments the ceremony is not over until after the weeding of the king's fields. While the Incwala songs are taboo during this time, the weeding of the royal fields is regarded as the duty of the "true" regiments. Those Swazi who fail to turn up for the weeding of the king's fields are derisively called boloNcwala or those who only participate during the main day of the Big Incwala. The general feeling is that BoloNcwala participate in the Incwala for personal, and pragmatic reasons such as to secure their political appointments. These regiments are mainly urban Swazi who are often criticized for failing to socialize with their fellow regiments in the royal barracks.

The "true" regiments, then, tend to be the rural Swazi, and their sense of commitment to and solidarity with one another is reinforced by the performance of tribute labour for kingship. During the weeding session, each age-regiment wears its distinctive headband, sings its own songs, and performs its peculiar dances. In fact, the actual weeding is superficial, and the task can be best handled by modern tractors or hired employees. But as a ritual, the weeding session is designed to inculcate positive attitudes towards the royalty as well as to foster the spirit of solidarity that prevails during the several days of weeding.

Dismissal of the Emabutfo

The final part of the Incwala ceremony is the formal dismissal of the regiments. At this time, the king usually makes a policy speech, and in January 1992 this session was held at the Engabezweni royal residence, a newly constructed royal village situated about ten kilometres from the Ludzidzini royal residence. King Mswati III thanked the regiments for their participation throughout the Incwala and also informed them about the impending appointment of the Tinkhundla Review Commission.

The Politics of Participation

Despite the fact that the setting and ritual activities of the Incwala sacralize and legitimate kingship, the social composition and the political ideology of the participants in 1991-92 strongly suggest that the Incwala has become a partisan ceremony which reinforces the group solidarity of the Swazi who advocate the absolute rule of the monarchy. While it was not possible to discern with certainty the social backgrounds and political views of all the Incwala participants, on the basis of my participation, interaction with, and informal interviews with both participants and non-participants, I observed that the participants at the Incwala were not representative of the broad spectrum of social, religious, and political positions within modern Swaziland.

The first indication that the Incwala represents a particular segment of contemporary Swazi society is that the main regiments in 1991-92 were from the rural areas and they included middle-aged and elderly conservative Swazi. For most Swazi living in rural areas, it is compulsory to participate in royal ceremonies. In 1991, for example, rural Swazi constituted the regular attendants at the Incwala from beginning to the end. Some of the young men who participated in the Incwala claimed to have been coerced by their chiefs to participate, and that failure to do so would have been punishable by a fine of one head of cattle.

Yet the participation of the rural Swazi cannot be explained simply in terms of coercion. Many of these participants make a deliberate, conscious effort to identify themselves with the political ideology of the 'traditionalists'. Given the long duration of the Incwala, these regular participants spend much money supporting themselves, and they have to forego the celebration of Christmas and New Year with their families and relatives. Some of the regiment members live with relatives in the vicinity of the royal village, while others build themselves small rooms called tinhlendlo within the royal residence. In terms of their expenditure of time, money, and energy in the ceremony, these persons constitute a specific social group that openly legitimates kingship as it is today.

The second manifestation of the partisan dimension of the emabutfo is the inculcation of specific attitudes towards the monarchy such as irrevocable allegiance to kingship and commitment to one's regiment. As I pointed out in Chapter Two, to join the emabutfo is to make a lifelong commitment. Like indigenous Swazi marriage which is irreversible, membership to the emabutfo implies commitment to serving the king throughout life. For example, when inducted into the emabutfo the initiate is required to perform a giya dance and declare before his age-regiment that: Nqiyawashiya Emabele! or "I hereby forsake my cornfields!". This public statement signifies that the regiment member will give ultimate priority to royal duties.

Indeed the member of the king's regiment has a unique status in Swazi society. This status includes a new name, a new social identity for the regiment member and his family, and the lifelong brotherhood with fellow regiment members. The solidarity among the regiment members is fostered at royal ceremonies like Incwala where it is compulsory to do almost everything together, such as walking around the village, and sharing food and drinks with one another.

Thus at the regimental barracks there is suspicion of newcomers. In spite of the popular slogan, Incwala ayibukelwa ("there are no spectators at the Incwala"), the new recruits are directly and indirectly interrogated about their respective family backgrounds, vocations, and political affiliations. The fear is that problematic SWAYOCO and PUDEMO members may infiltrate the king's regiments. Indeed in 1991 the police security department was reportedly investigating enemies of Swazi kingship among the regiments.

The third indication that the Incwala regiments comprise a distinct social group with peculiar interests and goals was that most of the regiments from the urban areas were composed of political appointees, including cabinet ministers, senior civil servants, members of parliament, and king's councillors. As a result, this group of Swazi was seen by the 'democratic' faction of urban Swazi as unscrupulous opportunists who use the Incwala as a means of social mobility or security of office. Thus in casual conversations with many urban

Swazi there was a tendency to assume that my own participation in the Incwala and the Easter ceremony was associated with my alliance with the 'traditionalists' or with political opportunism. Rarely was my participation in the royal ceremonies linked with concerns about Swazi identity and nationalism.

Non-participation

The Swazi monarchy takes the symbolism of participation in the Incwala very seriously. As Kuper observes, to the traditional leaders the actual participation of the Swazi in royal rituals is more important than their motives for participation (1972b:614). Thus a royal directive is made over the radio by the governor of Ludzidzini Royal Residence calling on the Swazi to participate in the ritual. This order renders non-participation a form of defiance or civil disobedience. Theoretically, participation in the Incwala is optional (Matsebula 1987:330); but in practice, as I have shown above, the rural Swazi whose livelihood is mostly dependent on land that falls under the chief's administration will yield to the coercion to perform tribute labour for the king.

Most urban Swazi, on the other hand, do not participate in the Incwala. When asked why they did not wish to participate in the Incwala, different social groups give different reasons. For Christians belonging to mission churches, the reason is that "it is not my religion"; while for young radicals the Incwala is an optional matter: "it is their dance". Other Swazi

condemn the entire social practice as immoral. For example one priest described the tribute service that characterizes the role of the regiment as "slavery", while a secondary school principal described tribute labour as "exploitation".

Thus, while the Incwala dramatizes fundamental Swazi values such as kingship, ancestral religion, tribute labour, and patrilineal descent, the impact of its the dominant theme, namely the valorization of kingship, is questionable. Indeed it is ironic that it was during the heat of the Incwala "sacred season" in 1991-92 that the new political movements opposed to absolute kingship stepped up their campaign to discredit the Swazi political structure. As The Times of Swaziland put it:

The Swazi society is in a state of social unrest ... underground malcontents excite the country toward a state of ungovernability (The Times of Swaziland, 8 Dec. 1991, p.3).

It was during this season that some Members of Parliament used the forum of the United Nations Human Rights Day in December criticize the 'traditionalists' for manipulating tradition to discourage political dissent. For example, one prominent Member of Parliament remarked that "in Swaziland, [human] rights are abused in the name of culture ... These days if we disagree over something I will say you are unSwazi" (The Times of Swaziland, 12 Dec. 1991, p.24).

Therefore, the tendency on the part of many urban Swazi commoners to shun and ignore the Incwala is part and parcel of the habitus of the commoners which I outlined in the previous chapter. I argued that during the colonial era many Swazi commoners welcomed social changes in Swazi society because of the benefits that accompanied this process, such as cultural distance from the monarchy, and prospects for social mobility, individual freedom, and democratic ideals. Likewise in the 1990's, the Swazi commoners resist absolute monarchy through the idiom of current concepts such as religious freedom, human rights, and democracy.

As a result, the non-participation of many church leaders, human rights activists, and political activists in the Incwala is not coincidental, but can be seen as a tacit rejection of the dominant theme of the ceremony, which links sacred kingship with absolute rule. This general aversion to the doctrine of sacred kingship on the part of some commoners is also demonstrated at the annual royal Easter ritual. It is at the royal Easter ceremony that the official interpretation of sacred kingship is contested by some Swazi commoners through discourse and other symbolic means. In the chapter that follows, I turn to a consideration of the royal Easter ritual.

NOTES

1. Significant anthropological studies of the Incwala include works by P.A.W Cook (1930); P.J. Schoeman (1935); B.A. Marwick 1940 (1966); H. Kuper (1944, 1947a, 1972a, 1973a, 1973b), M. Gluckman (1954); T.O. Beidelman (1966); and B. Lincoln (1987). Most interpretations of the Incwala by historians, political scientists, and theologians follow Hilda Kuper's structural-functionalist interpretation. For a detailed description and analysis of the Incwala, see Kuper, (1944). For an authoritative account of the underlying symbolism of the Incwala, see Beidelman (1966); and for a processual analysis of the ceremony see Kuper (1972a, 1973b, and 1986b).
2. Here I follow Sherry Ortner's definition of "key symbols" as those sacralized cultural symbols which summarize and represent for the natives "in an emotionally powerful and relatively undifferentiated way, what the system means to them" (Ortner 1979:94).
3. This is but one of the incidents which demonstrate the immense power enjoyed by the 'traditional' elites over the modern sector of Swazi society. However, the Minister of Industry and Tourism did apologise to all affected parties about the inconvenience of announcing the Incwala holiday only three days before the event.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE ROYAL EASTER RITUAL IN POST-COLONIAL SWAZILAND

This chapter develops the argument advanced in the previous chapter, namely that: in contemporary Swazi society, royal rituals like the Incwala objectify rather than resolve the tension between the monarchy and some urban commoners. I present a substantive description and analysis of the Swazi Easter ritual of 1992, showing that the ritual reflects and extends the political conflict between the 'traditional' elites and urban commoners. In contrast to existing literature which portrays the Easter ritual as a Christianized, monolithic discourse on divine kingship (Kuper 1978a:157; Sundkler 1976:208; Fogelqvist 1986:33), I show that unlike the Incwala, the Easter ritual provides room for the "invention of tradition" (cf. Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983) as well as for resistance to this process.

The chief argument of this chapter, therefore, is that the Easter ritual is an invented tradition that attempts to deal with the legitimacy crisis of the monarchy in contemporary Swazi society. As an invented tradition, the Easter ritual presents Swazi royal ancestors as "Christian" prophets whose injunctions are binding for all Swazi Christians. I show that this attempt to establish a cultural link between the ancestral and Christian religions through the medium

of the Easter ritual is not only a recent innovation, but also that it has been consistently rejected by urban Mission converts.

Following Comaroff (1985), Comaroff and Comaroff (1990), and Scott (1985, 1990), I maintain that the various ways in which the mission converts defy, shun, or challenge the invented Easter tradition can be interpreted as forms of resistance against domination. This dialectical process - the invention of tradition and resistance to this manipulation - constitutes the distinctive feature of the internal structure of the Easter ritual. I argue that this pattern is an extension of the current conflict between the aristocrats and the commoners over the distribution of political power.

Current Ethnographies of the Easter Ritual

Like most of the existing studies of the Incwala mentioned in the previous chapter, current interpretations of the Easter ritual are rooted in both the structural-functionalist and the anti-colonialist resistance paradigms which characterized much of the ethnographies of African societies during the decolonisation era. As I noted in Chapter Two, studies of the Easter ritual within the colonial context highlight the significance of the indigenized Easter celebration as an integrating instrument as well as a symbol of resistance against Western cultural domination (cf. Kuper 1947b; Sundkler 1961, 1976).

This argument has been extended to the post-colonial era, to suggest that the Easter ritual, like the Incwala, signifies the continuing integrative role of the myth of divine kingship in contemporary Swaziland. For example, in her brief appraisal of the function of the Easter ritual in post-colonial Swaziland, Kuper describes this Christian ritual as an interdenominational ceremony in which "the allegiance [to the monarchy] of many converts is specifically demonstrated" (1972a:609). More specifically, she portrays the Easter ritual as one of the national ceremonies which signify the cohesive function of "the priest-king of the Swazi in a country of competing religions" (1972a:613). For Kuper, then, the Easter ritual resolves the tension between the non-Christian king and Swazi church leaders and converts (1986a:1412); and as a result many converts regard the Easter ritual as "the Ncwala for Christians" (1978a:157).

This positive appraisal of the Easter ceremony is followed by other scholars such as Sundkler and Fogelqvist. Sundkler (1976) develops Kuper's interpretation by showing that the apotheosization of King Sobhuza II at the Easter ritual was modelled on the Incwala ritual of kingship. For Sundkler, the Easter ceremony is but one line of evidence for the fact that "the total pattern of Swazi life was, and is, dominated by kingship" (1976:206). As Fogelqvist also notes, the Easter ritual is a "Christian counterpart to Ncwala" (1986a:33), and

that "by aligning themselves with kingship the [the "Zionist" Christians] have also come to accept the concept of divine kingship" (1986:33).

Like the analysis of the Incwala cited in the previous chapter, the major weakness of these interpretations is that they ignore the sense of conflict that characterizes the discourse of the Easter ritual in post-independence Swaziland. This conflict, which I call the semantic dialectic (cf. Comaroff 1985:263) involves the contest over the contemporary meaning of key symbols in Swazi culture such as the monarchy. As Comaroff and Comaroff (1990:222-250) and other writers show (e.g., MacGaffey 1986:104-5), all societies often affirm, defend, or even contest power relations through religious symbolism. As I argue below, far from making a "contribution to the fostering of cultural nationalism" as Kuper claims (1986a:142), the symbolism of the Easter ritual exacerbates the tension between the monarchy and many Christian commoners.

I also indicate that the Easter ritual does not simply reflect shared indigenous values and beliefs but can be seen as the embodiment of the official, politicized version of Swazi 'traditional' values. To emphasise the partisan and polemical nature of the Easter ritual in post-colonial Swaziland, I follow Geertz (1973:93), Lane (1981:12) and Turner (1988:102), who draw a distinction between rituals which serve as "models for" or the "subjunctive mood" of desired cultural values on the one hand, and those that serve as

"models of" (Geertz) or "the indicative mood" (Turner) of prevalent values on the other. I show that the Easter ritual serves more as a ritual of mobilization and coercion than as celebration of a consensus of values between the monarchy and the Christian commoners; hence the semantic dialectic.

The Setting of the Ritual

The Swazi Easter ritual is a five-day Christian ceremony in which thousands of Swazi Christians - the overwhelming majority being members of Swazi Zionist churches - gather at the Queen Mother's residence at Ludzidzini to commemorate the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Like other new royal rituals such as the King's Birthday Celebration wherein the Swazi nation is depicted as one family headed by the king (cf. The Times of Swaziland Sunday, 26 April 1992, p.2), the Easter ritual defines the Swazi monarchs as divinely appointed politico-religious leaders whose guidance has led, and will continue to lead, the nation to peace and prosperity.

For all intents and purposes, the Easter ritual is a royal ceremony. As I pointed out in Chapter Two, the Zionist leaders consider the Easter ritual a "royal ceremony" and without the royalty the ritual may not be performed. Significantly, the queen mother, who is also the custodian of all major national ceremonies, is the chief hostess of the Easter ritual. As well, her son, the king, who is the patron of the Zionist churches, plays an active role in the ceremony.

Since each day of the ritual is graced by the active participation of either the Ingwenyama or the Indlovukati, the Easter ritual effectively becomes an official, national ritual requiring the presence of leading royal figures and the political elites.

For example, on Good Friday - the first day of the ritual - the queen mother is the hostess, and this session takes place at the Swazi National Church. Although the church building is not a convenient venue for the thousands of Zionist Christians who attend this ceremony, it is nonetheless used for symbolic reasons. As the queen mother puts it: "the National Church is like a Child of the nation. It cannot be ignored because of its small size". On Good Friday, the queen mother is always accompanied by the queens, senior princes and princesses, senior royal councillors, the prime minister, several cabinet ministers, and the governor of the Tinkhundla system of government. On this day the queen mother addresses the nation, and the queens entertain the Christian congregation with music.

On the other days of the Easter ritual such as Saturday, Sunday, and Tuesday, it is the king who becomes the host and he is expected to make a speech of each occasion. On Sunday, the king meets with Christians at the Somhiolo National Stadium, while on Saturday and Tuesday he meets the people at his residence known as Lozitha Royal Residence.

Thus, the monarchy takes the Easter ritual very seriously, and royal representatives are involved in the preparation and organization of the entire ceremony. During the course of the ceremony the monarchy is represented by the governor of the capital royal residence, Ludzidzini, as well as by the chief liaison officer between the monarchy and the churches. Thus before the ceremonies begin, the governor of the royal capital and the chief liaison officer have to present the officials of the Easter ceremony to the queen mother. These officials are usually bishops of Zionist churches who also serve on the executive committee of the League of African Churches in Swaziland. It is this committee that helps select speakers for the entire Easter ritual. But the ultimate master of ceremonies for the Easter ritual is the chief liaison officer who is also one of the leading royal councillors in the present regime.

Yet, despite its apparent support of the Easter ritual, the Swazi royalty makes a clear distinction between the Incwala and the Easter ritual. In fact, to the monarchy the Easter ritual is not a Christian Incwala because such a notion is tantamount to blasphemy. According to one prominent prince who is also a liaison officer between the churches and the monarchy:

There is nothing like a 'Christian Incwala'. Good Friday and Incwala are incomparable to each other. The Incwala is a sacred ceremony. To speak of the Incwala is to move into an entirely different realm altogether! (Interview April 16, 1992).

The truth of this statement is borne out by the non-verbal symbolism of the Easter ritual. First, the social space where the royalty meets with the Christians is non-secular by royal Swazi standards. For example, none of the Easter rites takes place in the Sibaya or the national cattle byre. Instead, the Christians meet with the royalty under the trees on the outskirts of the royal residence or at the National Church and the Somhlolo National Stadium. In the second place, the emabutfo or national regiments are conspicuously absent, and the king, who is the leader of all national regiments, appears in his casual indigenous attire which includes woven cloth, leopard skins, and sandals. Thirdly, the public announcement concerning the Easter ritual are not made by the governor of Ludzidzini but by the president of the League of African Churches in Swaziland, the umbrella organisation that represents the interests of Swazi independent churches.

Participation

The main participants at the Easter ritual are the Zionist Christians who are attired for the occasion in different church uniforms comprising gowns, sashes, wooden and brass crosses. That the Zionist Christians take great pride in their participation in the ritual can be discerned from their elegant gowns that constitute the general costume of the occasion, and the myriad of colours of these gowns include: blue, green, yellow, black, and white. Thus, collectively,

the Zionists turn the Easter ceremony into an animated, colourful occasion whose most dramatic moments are characterized by singing and dancing for the queen mother and the king. In view of the fact that all Swazi Zionist Christians are required to attend the Easter ritual, the entire royal village becomes populated by spectators, tourists, journalists, and enterprising vendors selling cooked food, fruit, religious literature, and non-alcoholic beverages.

But the social composition of the Zionist participants at the Easter ritual is hardly representative of the various classes and social groups in Swazi society. In the first place, the Zionist churches, as I pointed out in Chapter Two, are comprised mainly of rural, conservative, semi-illiterate, lower class Swazi. This marginalized status of the Zionists also extends to most of the Zionist clergy who are less educated than their counterparts in mission churches, who normally receive basic formal education as well as Western theological training. In the second place, while the overwhelming majority of the participants are women, Zionist women play a secondary, supportive role in the Easter ritual. For example, all the Zionist church leaders who preach at the Easter ceremony are men. This scenario contrasts sharply with many mission churches in which women are given administrative and teaching roles such as preaching and teaching.

Thus, conspicuously absent from the Easter ritual are many Swazi belonging to mission churches. In fact, most of the older mission churches such

as the Methodist Church, the Roman Catholic Church, the Evangelical Lutheran Church, and the South African General Mission conduct their own Easter conventions during the Easter weekend. When asked if they were going to participate in the Easter ritual of 1992, all the Swazi church leaders belonging to mission churches expressed their reluctance to forego their own meaningful Easter services for a "Zionist Convention". However, there was also another fundamental problem that faced the Mission Church leaders concerning the Easter ritual, namely, the fact that the entire ceremony was planned at the royal capital under the direct supervision of the king's representatives. As one young pastor of the Church of the Nazarene put it: "The policy of our church is to distance itself from the state".

However, many Swazi church leaders belonging to mission churches do participate in the royal Easter ritual on particular days such as the Saturday session called Lunyawo LwaJesu or Jesus' Footprint, and in the Easter Sunday ceremony. At both of these sessions, selected church leaders from mission churches are permitted to express their interpretations of the Bible; and it is in these sessions that many Swazi church leaders challenge the dominant ideology of the Easter ritual which portrays the Swazi monarchy as the divinely appointed leaders of the church in Swaziland. Indeed it is during the Saturday session that the semantic dialectic between the traditional elite and the commoners becomes more manifest.

Yet the absence of church leaders from mission churches in the daily activities of the Easter ceremony is one of the main concerns of the royalty. To the Swazi monarchy, the function of all Swazi Christians and their leaders is to pray and strive for national solidarity, peace, and the wellbeing of the monarchy. In this role the Christian community is collectively known as Besivikelo or "the defenders of the state" (cf. Prince Mtsetfwa on Religion Day, July 15, 1990: Archives of Swaziland Broadcasting and Information Services). Indeed, King Mswati III himself has repeatedly expressed his concern about the absence of mission Christians and their leaders. For example, in his farewell address to the Swazi church leaders during the Easter ritual of 1990, the king had asked:

Where are the other Reverends? . . . When we went to the National Church for the Good Friday service the other churches were nowhere to be seen. . . I hope you will look into this issue. I noted this problem last year but I do not see any changes (Liqcolo, April 17, 1990: Archives of Swaziland Broadcasting and Information Services).

Thus while the king often refers to the Zionists as emaghaw

lamakhulu or "great heroes", a concerted effort is made by the chief liaison officer to encourage the active participation of various Christian denominations other than the Zionists. As a result, well known church leaders from mission churches who happen to participate in one of the Easter rites are frequently asked - on the spot - to preach to the nation. As well, other visiting African preachers, mainly from South Africa, are always given the opportunity to

address the nation. Invariably, the visiting preachers usually pay tribute to the monarchy for its support of the church in Swaziland.

Thus, like the participants of the Incwala ritual who represent particular social groups such as the rural, conservative Swazi and the 'traditional' elite, the Zionist laity and clergy embody a specific politicized group of Swazi Christians who subscribe to the absolute rule of the monarchy. The fact that most church leaders belonging to mission churches tend to ignore and shun the Easter ritual is frequently interpreted by the Zionist church leaders as tangible evidence of the divisive role of missionary Christianity. As a result, Swazi converts to mission churches are often portrayed as misguided individuals who 'ape' Western customs. This negative attitude on the part of many Zionist leaders has also contributed to the polemical and partisan tone of the Easter ritual. As I show below, the main topic of the Easter ritual is not the death and resurrection of Christ but the exhortation to Christians to defend the monarchy which is the custodian of the Christian religion.

Structure of the Easter Discourse

In contrast to the Incwala ritual in which the meaning of the ceremony is largely embedded in highly formalized and condensed symbolism, the discourse of the Easter ritual is more discursive and exhortative. As I have shown in the previous chapter, the key symbols of Swazi culture which are

dramatized at the Incwala ceremony are kingship, the national priests, and the emabutfo. Collectively these key symbols embody numerous dominant values and institutions such as ancestral religion, divine kingship, magic and witchcraft, total allegiance to the monarchy, patrilineal descent, and indigenous or Zionist churches.

The Easter ritual, on the other hand, can rightly be called an elaborating symbol or a commentary on the key symbols of Swazi culture (cf. Ortner 1979:94-5). Unlike the Incwala ritual in which the meanings of the key symbols of Swazi culture are multi-dimensional and at times implicit, the discourse of the Easter ritual defines and re-defines these symbols. As Ortner points out in her analysis of the distinction between the "summarizing" and "elaborating" symbols" of any particular culture, summarizing symbols tend to be comprehensive in terms of meaning and application while elaborating symbols are "essentially analytic", and are valued primarily for their "conceptual elaborating power" as well as for their role as "mechanisms for successful social action" (1979:94-5). Likewise, the Easter discourse explains and interprets dominant institutions and values such as divine kingship, the link between the royal ancestors and the churches, and the primacy of "cultural heritage" in contemporary Swazi society.

As an elaborating symbol of Swazi culture, the Easter ritual serves to define and interpret the relationship between the monarchy and the churches.

Significantly, on each day of the five-day ceremony, the king or the queen mother makes an exhortative address to the Christians, and these royal speeches - which are frequently covered by the press, radio, and the local television - are intended as policy statements and commentaries on the political climate as well as on church-state relations in the country.

Despite its discursive style, however, the Easter ritual follows a distinct, routinized rhetoric in which the rights and obligations of the Swazi royalty and the churches are outlined by the king, the queen mother, the chief liaison officer, and different Zionist church leaders. The dominant motif of the Easter rhetoric is that God communicated His will for Swaziland through the founding king of the Swazi nation, King Somhlolo (1816-1836); and that if the Swazi follow the injunctions of the royalty the nation will live in peace and prosperity.

This theme is generally interpreted to signify that Swaziland is a Christian country, ruled by a Christian royalty, and that the primary function of the churches is to support and defend the monarchy. This motif is normally expressed through various media such as sermons and prayers given by selected Zionist preachers, speeches by the royalty, special songs for the royalty, and celebratory dances.

More importantly, this theme is vigorously pursued by the king and the queen mother who do not merely make stately addresses to the nation but

also play the role of religious leaders. As I show below, the king and the queen mother do not only preach and commend the Christian religion to all Swazi, but they each have their special songs which ambiguously glorify both Jesus and the Swazi dual monarchs as "Kings of Kings".

The portrayal of the Swazi royalty as apologists for the Christian religion is a recent invention. As I pointed out in Chapter Two, Swazi rulers were reluctant to convert to Christianity for fear of contradicting the doctrine of sacred kingship (cf. Kuper 1984:70). But since the beginning of the reign of King Mswati III in 1986, the former divide between indigenous sacred kingship and Christianity is gradually being 'bridged' through the Easter ritual. However, in view of the fact that most Swazi belonging to mission churches are usually absent from the royal Easter ritual, this dominant motif assumes a polemical tone against those Swazi Christians "who disparage this royal [church] service" (Zionist Pastor, Good Friday, March 29, 1991: Archives of Swaziland Broadcasting and Information Services).

These "detrribalized Swazi" who are said to despise and ignore the Easter ritual are usually reminded that liBhayibheli lafikela esigodlweni or "the Bible was first revealed to the royal house" (Good Friday, April 17, 1992: Archives of Swaziland Broadcasting and Information Services). This means that the credit for the introduction of Christianity does not simply go to the missionaries, but primarily to the Swazi royal ancestors through whom God

disclosed His will for Swaziland, which included the acceptance of the Bible and the rejection of violent confrontation with Europeans (Zionist Pastor, Good Friday, March 29, 1991: Archives of Swaziland Broadcasting and Information Services).

The basic intent of this rhetoric is to affirm the primacy of Swazi 'tradition' over the various Western customs which were introduced by mission churches. The Swazi royalty, which is the ultimate symbol and custodian of Swazi 'tradition', is presented as God's special appointed leaders. Indeed Swaziland is described by one Zionist pastor as a "beloved, blessed nation" (Good Friday, March 29, 1991: Archives of Swaziland Broadcasting and Information Services); and outstanding royal ancestors like King Somhlolo (1816-1836) and King Sobhuza II (1921-1982) are "beatified" and presented as God's messengers to Swaziland and the world at large.

This premise that Swazi tradition - and not foreign customs - should inform the Swazi interpretation of the Christian religion is the focus of the Saturday session entitled Lunyawo LwaJesu or "Jesus' Footprint". At this session Swazi church leaders from different denominations discuss selected moral issues arising from the tensions between biblical ethics and Swazi culture, and conflicts among the different Christian doctrines over specific Swazi customs. Topics for discussion, for instance, during the 1980's, and 1990's have included mourning rituals for widows, the Sabbath and Seventh Day

Adventists, and baptism and the royal clan. Although the stated purpose of this session is "to search for the footprint of Jesus", the dominant theme of this session is that the behaviour of the Swazi ought to be grounded in Swazi tradition.

However, this position is often challenged at the Lunyawo LwaJesu by other church leaders belonging to mission churches who assert the supremacy of the Bible or God's law over Swazi traditions. Nonetheless, these non-conformists, who include members of some Evangelical churches, the Seventh Day Adventists, and the Jehovah's Witnesses, are always in a minority and they are often ridiculed as misguided Christians. The Lunyawo LwaJesu, then, is the only social space at the Easter ritual through which Swazi belonging to mission churches can openly exercise their limited freedom to challenge certain dominant socio-cultural values in the name of religious freedom. As a result, this session invariably turns out to be a lively debating session in which the Zionists affirm the primacy of tradition while mission Christians emphasize the supremacy of biblical values.

The dominant rhetoric of the Easter ritual, then, is generally propounded by Zionist pastors and the Swazi royalty, and its characteristic feature is its polemic against mission churches and other 'enemies' of the monarchy who are critical of the official 'traditionalist' ideology.

I now turn to the sequential description of the Easter ritual focusing on the dialectical slant of the ceremony. I begin with the Good Friday session, the distinctly "Zionist day" of the Easter ceremony.

The Good Friday Session

Aside from the preparatory meetings held by Zionist church leaders in conjunction with the governor of the Ludzidzini Royal Residence and the king's representative during the entire ceremony, the Easter ritual officially begins on Good Friday. On this day, the royal village of Lobamba is normally inundated with Zionist Christians arriving in hired buses from different parts of the country.

Fittingly, the ceremony begins with a procession by the different Zionist denominations to the queen mother's residence. As each Zionist denomination participates in this procession in its own distinctive, impeccable church uniform, the assortment of red, blue, green, yellow, white, and black colours transforms the procession into a distinguished phenomenon. As it make its way towards the queen mother's residence, this parade is characterized by singing, dancing, and in some cases "possession" by the Holy Spirit. Upon arriving at the precincts of the queen mother's residence, the church leaders make brief prayers and then redirect the procession toward the National Church where the Good Friday session is normally held.

Although the National Church is too small to accommodate all the Zionist pilgrims, its symbolic significance appears to outweigh the inconvenience caused to the thousands of Zionists who are forced to listen to the proceedings from outside. In the first place, the National Church has reserved seats of honour for the royalty, which includes the queen mother, the queens, and Bantwanbenkhosi or princes and princesses. In addition, the National Church is popularly known as the "Zionist Church" because of the instrumental role played by the Zionist churches and the Swazi royalty in its construction and frequent use. Indeed on Good Friday, practically all those present at this session are attired in Zionist costume with the notable exception of the royalty, the king's representative, plainclothes policemen, and a few political leaders who include the prime minister and other cabinet ministers.

The proceedings of the Good Friday session take the form of a general Sunday church service, with the Zionist church leaders giving sermons based on selected passages from the Bible. For the Good Friday service, however, the same passages of Scripture are read year after year and these Scripture readings are known as "The Seven Sayings of Jesus on the Cross". Selected Zionist pastors are asked to read and comment on the texts "as the Spirit guides them", and all the preachers give oral, dialogical sermons in which the active participation of the congregation is solicited and signified by occasional exclamations and shouts of "Amen"!

However, the main thrust of the Zionist sermons is not simply the promise of salvation through Jesus Christ or his paradigmatic role for Christian morality. Rather it is the religious, moral, and social significance of the Swazi royalty. The basic rhetoric of the Zionist sermons is that the Swazi kings are divinely appointed to guide the nation to peace, unity, and prosperity. In turn, the role of the church, then, is to defend the kingdom against local enemies.

In view of the conflictual political climate of the early 1990's, and the fact that mission churches ignore the royal Easter ritual, this rhetoric is presented as a polemic against all Swazi who denigrate or challenge the legitimacy of the monarchy. For example, in his commentary on Luke 23.43 in which Jesus says "Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise", one Zionist pastor at the 1992 Easter ritual preached about God's universal grace and love for humanity. He summarized his short sermon by emphasizing that God demonstrated his love for Swaziland by "first converting the royal clan":

We people of King NGwane,
Are a fortunate nation because,
God first converted the monarchy.
Since the monarchy exonerated itself
From the charge of resisting the Gospel,
What will be our excuse before God
For rejecting the Gospel?
(Good Friday, April 17, 1992: Archives of Swaziland Broadcasting
and Information Services).

This theme recurs in different contexts at different phases of the Easter ceremony. In addition, it is significant to note that even on the Good Friday session of the Easter ritual, other Zionist pastors who comment and preach on the different "Sayings of Jesus on the Cross" make frequent reference to the providential role of the monarchy in Swazi society. For example, another Zionist pastor preached in 1991 on the saying: "It is finished" (John 19.30), by noting, in part, that for Swaziland this portion of Scripture means the completion of God's mission for the Swazi through the appointment of the royal clan as paradigmatic political leaders who are the envy of the world:

It is finished!
 What does this mean to us?
 We are the most popular nation,
 We are loved by the whole world,
 All nations desire to see the Kingdom of Swaziland!
 Amen Brethren! Amen Christians! Amen Zionists!
 All nations desire to see the land of peace,
 To see the land that has a rich cultural heritage,
 To see the land that lives according to God's decree!
 (Good Friday, March 29, 1991: Archives of Swaziland Broadcasting
 and Information Services).

A similar nationalistic sentiment is also expressed by another Zionist Church leader in the same year who preached on the saying: "Father unto thy hands I commit my spirit" (Luke 23.46). Following his reading of this verse, the pastor reminded the congregation that death is the gateway to heaven and that the Swazi are fortunate because God revealed the path to heaven through King Somhlolo:

Brethren it is clear to us that,
 As we are alive in body,
 The body will perish
 And we shall return to Jesus.
 But brethren we are fortunate,
 Our fortune originates with our Ancestor Somhlolo,
 Through whom God showed his love for the Swazi,
 And told us to forsake our evil ways. Amen!
 (Good Friday, March 29, 1991: Archives of Swaziland Broadcasting
 and Information Services).

Thus the credit for the general wellbeing of the Swazi nation goes to the royal house, and anybody who challenges the monarchy is portrayed as contradicting God's command:

As the Word of God in Romans reveals,
 Kings were appointed by God of the Heavens,
 So that we live under their rule.
 Whosoever opposes them,
 Will be opposing what was decreed by God.
 It was God who gave the kings the right to use force,
 The kings use force to guide, preserve, and sustain the nation.
 We survive as a nation because of royal protection.
 Amen brethren!
 (Good Friday, March 29, 1991: Archives of Swaziland Broadcasting
 and Information Services).

This is but one of several examples which show that while the Easter ritual is a royal ceremony in which the Christian religion is affirmed as a normative belief system in Swaziland, the accent is on the political and religious supremacy of the royalty, and on the need for all the Swazi churches to acknowledge this special status of the monarchy in the religious and political realms. One of the ways by which the churches can demonstrate their loyalty

and obedience to the monarchy is to participate in the royal Easter ritual. Indeed, as many Zionist church leaders point out again and again, the absence of mission churches from the Easter ritual can be interpreted as a snubbing of the royal ceremony. For example, another Zionist leader in 1991 interpreted the prevalence of parallel Easter rituals by different churches alongside the royal Easter ritual as a sign that mission churches despise the monarchy:

We look down upon our kings,
By conducting Easter services in our own homes,
By conducting our services in our respective churches,
By denigrating the Easter royal service and calling it names! [Such as "Zionist Ritual"].
Amen brethren!
(Good Friday, March 29, 1991: Archives of Swaziland Broadcasting and Information Services).

The fact that the Easter ritual presents the Swazi royalty as authentic and historical Christian leaders is primarily symbolized by the new role played by the queens or the king's wives at the Good Friday session in 1992. For the first time since the beginning of the Easter ritual in 1937, the queens entertained the Christians with an animated song backed by a instrumental music from a keyboard instrument. Normally the queens - including the queen mother - sit passively throughout the ceremony without uttering a single word. Since this performance was unprecedented and therefore "unSwazi" to many, the queen mother in her sermon - which is itself a radical departure from 'tradition' - explained that the queens, like the queen mother and other

members of the Swazi royalty, have accepted Jesus Christ, and "are not ashamed of the gospel". As it will become clear in the excerpts from her address, the queen mother assumed the role of a preacher herself; and since she is a head of state in conjunction with the king, her homily was televised, broadcast, and also published in the local newspapers.

In defence of the "UnSwazi" decorum of the queens, as well as her own preaching style, the queen mother stated:

Some Swazi will wonder why
 The queens decided to sing for you today.
 The reason is that
 We are Swazi royalty that love Jesus,
 Because the Gospel first arrived at the royal house.
 The Gospel was first introduced to the king!
 We are not ashamed of the Gospel!
 I will be brief brethren,
 Because of the limitations placed by my office.
 What I am saying is that we found Jesus!
 We are not ashamed about Jesus!
 If you are still are ashamed of Jesus,
 This means that you still believe in other deities.
 If that is the case, get rid of other beliefs!
 And take Jesus,
 Jesus is life!
 Jesus is light!
 God Bless You.
 (Good Friday, April 17, 1992: Archives of Swaziland Broadcasting
 and Information Services).

This homily was well received by the congregation. It was punctuated by the usual interjections of assent which are signified by shouts of "Amen!". But the popularity of the queen mother becomes most apparent at the end of

the Good Friday session when Zionist church leaders and their followers escort her to her limousine through jubilant singing and dancing. The emotional attachment of the Zionists to the queen mother is uncontained. Even the security police can hardly restrain the elated Zionists from getting close to her. This is a special moment for the queen mother since a special song for her is sung, and she normally dances to it in typical Zionist style. The title of the song is "Siyakudvumisa Nkhosi Yamakhosi" or "We Praise you King of Kings". This song is also sung especially for the queen mother when she arrives or leaves Somhlolo National Stadium on Easter Sunday. Smiling broadly and looking jubilant, the queen mother fully acknowledges the affection of the Zionist Christians.

The lyrics of the queen mother's special song are simple and straightforward:

Siyakudvumisa, Siyakudvumisa, Siyakudvumisa, Nkhosi
yamakhosi.[We praise you, we praise you, King of Kings].
Akekh' ofana nawe, akekh' ofana nawe, akekh' ofana nawe,
Nkhosi yamakhosi.[You are matchless, you are matchless, you are
matchless, King of Kings].
Siza kuwe senamile, siza kuwe senamile, siza kuwe senamile,
Nkhosi yamakhosi. [We come to you come to you merrily, we come
to you merrily, King of Kings].

Like some of the sacred Incwala songs, the meaning of the song is reinforced more by repetition, rhythm and accompanying dance than by its literal meaning. Yet there is no doubt that the deliberate ambiguity of the

refrain, "King of Kings", is appropriate for the Good Friday session which is basically the queen mother's day as well as the Zionist Day.

Lunyawo LwaJesu or Jesus' Footprint

The Saturday session called Lunyawo LwaJesu is a forum for the discussion of contentious moral issues arising from conversion to Christianity. In general, this assembly, which takes place at Lozitha Palace, signifies the cordial relations between the Swazi Zionist pastors and the king.

The Lozitha Palace is situated about ten kilometres from the Lobamba village, the ritual capital where the Good Friday session is held. Unlike the Lobamba village, which boasts the queen mother's residence and which is the ultimate administrative and ritual capital of the nation, the king's residence is basically a regular administrative centre where the king normally meets with various groups and deputations such as Swazi entrepreneurs, teachers, and foreign dignitaries. The business atmosphere of the king's palace is reinforced by the impressive offices of the Tibiyo TakaNqwane and Tisuka TakaNqwane, two of the country's lucrative para-statal organisations which are operated by the monarchy on behalf of the Swazi nation. These major para-statal businesses derive their incomes from mineral royalties which are in turn invested in major international capitalist institutions in Swaziland (cf. Stephen 1986:203-204).

Nonetheless when the church leaders meet with the king this occasion assumes a 'traditional' format. The meeting, which is composed of about four hundred Zionist pastors and several Mission Church pastors, takes place outdoors and the participants sit on the ground under the gum trees. The Zionist church delegation, which dominates the discussion by virtue of its numerical advantage as well as on account of historical precedent, is comprised mainly of male, elderly pastors, many of whom are the founding fathers of the Easter ritual. As I show below, these senior Zionist pastors are regarded by the royalty as "elders" and reliable representatives of tradition. It is these elders who dominate the discourse of this session and they interpret the resilience of the Easter ceremony as God's vindication of the Zionist churches which - during the colonial era - were despised and ridiculed by certain Swazi church leaders belonging to mission churches.

In contrast, the pastors from the mission churches are portrayed as the representatives of new, divisive, and controversial doctrines which are "turning the Bible upside down". The churches that are singled out for criticism and ridicule include the Seventh Day Adventists which places undue emphasis on the strict observance of biblical laws; and bosindisiwe or "the Saved Ones", that is, those evangelical churches which stress personal salvation and individual morality. The polemic against mission churches is further kindled by the conspicuous absence of the church leaders belonging to mainline mission

churches such as the Methodist Church, the Church of the Nazarene, the Africa Evangelical Church, the Anglican Church, the Roman Catholic Church, and the Lutheran Church.

Significantly, the session is chaired by the king's representative, who is also the liaison officer between the monarchy and the church leaders. It is the king's representative who announces the topics of discussion, regulates the flow of the discourse, and formally introduces the king as the head of the church in Swaziland. As a representative of Swazi tradition, the king always wears his casual indigenous attire consisting of leopard skins tied around the waist and woven cloth around the shoulders. This attire contrasts sharply with the formal Western attire worn by the church leaders.

The expressed purpose of this meeting is two-fold. In the first place, this social practice aims at promoting inter-church dialogue, mutual exchange of ideas, and a spirit of tolerance among all Swazi church leaders. Ideally all Swazi churches ought to be represented at the session, and the Bible taken as the yardstick against which different opinions and doctrines are to be evaluated. More often than not, doctrinal differences are not resolved, but it is hoped that the participants will learn to accept different opinions. Consequently this part of the Easter ceremony is popularly known as "the debating session". As King Mswati III put it to the church leaders in 1991:

This day is very important in that Reverends educate one another, with each person expressing his own opinion. This practice is somewhat similar to party politics or rival soccer teams wherein each group represents and commends its own party. However, like political leaders in Western democratic countries overseas who retain mutual relations with their political opponents, you too will not harbour grudges against one another. (Lunyawo LwaJesu, March 30, 1991: Archives of Swaziland Broadcasting and Information Services).

The second purpose of this session is to strengthen the 'existing' bond between the king and Swazi church leaders. According to the king's representative at the Easter ceremony, who is also the senior liaison officer between the monarchy and the churches, the king is the head of all Swazi Christian churches and the Swazi church leaders value this link:

Great Beast! Your church, Ngwenyama [Lion], asks me to express its gratitude to You of the Inner House, for coming to this session today. The church feels blessed and encouraged by your presence, Great Beast. (Lunyawo LwaJesu, March 30, 1991: Archives of Swaziland Broadcasting and Information Services).

In practice, however, the discussion takes the form of a dialectic between Zionist and Mission Church leaders over the place of Swazi tradition in the life of the Christian. As I noted above, the dominant concern of the Easter ritual is to emphasize the special status of the monarchy in the history and life of the Swazi Christian community. The mission churches, often represented by as few as twenty pastors, are usually the butt of ridicule during these meetings. The main reason for this conflict is that the few Mission Church leaders who

participate at the Lunyawo LwaJesu tend to use this forum to criticize specific aspects of Swazi customs such as the sacralization of Swazi rulers, ancestral beliefs, and the alliance between the Zionists and the monarchy. While Zionist pastors stress the acknowledgement of ascribed status and the reverence for tradition, Mission Church leaders frequently highlight individual morality and the equality of all Swazi, including the monarchs, before God.

For example, the topic for the 1992 debate at the Lunyawo LwaJesu was the Ten Commandments and the problem of observing biblical regulations concerning issues like the Sabbath Day. Several Mission Church leaders spoke to this topic, each affirming the supremacy of God's law (the Bible) over human customs. One speaker, in particular, claimed that conversion to Jesus Christ is a personal affair which supersedes Swazi traditions, nationalism, and denominationalism:

Before you I present Jesus saving people from their sins. I present Jesus as a deliverer and an advocate. Jesus delivers people from sin. Jesus delivers a person from the slavery of sin. Jesus delivers a person from the bondage of Satan, of death, of the demons. Jesus is his name! Whether you are a Shangaan, or a Swazi, a Zionist, a Catholic, a Methodist, or Seventh Day Adventist; if you believe in the name of Jesus; if you accept Jesus into you heart; if you accept Jesus as your saviour; you are God's child, and your name is not written by the Reverend in the Book of Eternal Life. It is Jesus Himself, who writes your name through His blood.

(Lunyawo LwaJesu, April 18, 1992: Archives of Swaziland Broadcasting and Information Services).

This address was apparently directed at the Zionist church leaders who are known to be very tolerant of indigenous beliefs which are commonly referred to as "demon worship". But more importantly, this address took the form of a scathing criticism of the Zionist church leaders for failing to preach the "truth" which is that Jesus is above every law and is "the King of Kings". A case in point is the questionable 'Christian' status of the king who has never been baptized into any Christian denomination yet he is credited with being the Christian leader of the Swazi nation.

The Zionist leaders, on the other hand, follow the philosophical position laid down by King Sobhuza II that the Swazi convert to Christianity should retain good indigenous customs and select and appropriate only the best elements from Western culture. As I pointed out in Chapter Two, King Sobhuza was unequivocally opposed to specific European practices which promoted individualism and new forms of collective bargaining and power sharing such as trade unionism and party-politics. Instead he favoured the indigenous value system in which individual rights and obligations were ascribed by birth, age, and sex.

The general application of this doctrine at the Lunyawo LwaJesu debate works to subordinate biblical and denominational ordinances to dominant indigenous values. More specifically, the Zionist position presents the monarchy as the true representative of Swazi tradition; and the royalty in turn

presents the wisdom of the elderly Zionist church leaders as the model for all Swazi church leaders. Thus, while the title of this session is "the footprint of Jesus", the accent of the session is to highlight the role of Swazi 'tradition' - and not simply the Gospel of Jesus - as the unifying principle for the Swazi churches.

For example, at the 1991 session of the Lunyawo Lwajesu, in response to the claim by some Mission Church leaders that the king is not an authentic Christian, one senior Zionist pastor rejected this view, citing Rev. 12.24, to contend that in heaven kings and the pastors will be judged by different standards, and that the king will represent the Swazi before God during the Judgement Day:

The pastor who suggested that the king will be excluded from Heaven because he has not been baptized is misinformed. You see, we pastors are ordained for the ministry. Our ordination is different from that of the king because our task is to serve believers in God; persons who aim to lead a life of holiness. The ordination of the king, however, is different in that the king will rule over Christians, drunks, sorcerers, and the like. The king is ordained to rule over the good and the wicked. Therefore one cannot expect the king to be baptized by the pastor. The pastor is a commoner and he himself has to be baptized, and not the king. (Lunyawo Lwajesu, March 30, 1991: Archives of Swaziland Broadcasting and Information Services).

This conviction that the king transcends Christian doctrinal requirements was roundly applauded by a thunderous laughter and the clapping

of hands. As well, the king, in his usual address to the clergy, also endorsed this view. Nonetheless he began his speech with a strong commendation of the elderly Zionist pastors for their responsible roles as the bearers of good cultural values which help sustain and hold the nation together. The king described Zionist pastors as role models whose values are the cornerstones of the stability and prosperity of the Kingdom of Swaziland:

Reverends, we are delighted to listen to the speeches presented today. It is clear that if this practice persists in this fashion, the nation will live. We look upon you as elders of the nation, to teach us good values which will stabilize the nation, and not a legacy of division which will destroy us. Many young Swazi are willing to learn from you so that they can preserve the good values. Therefore, in order for the nation to survive, you elders should teach us the way which will lead us to the light; and the way that will sustain this nation of King Ngwane; so that it may be a prosperous nation. (Lunyawo LwaJesu, March 30, 1991: Archives of Swaziland Broadcasting and Information Services).

Following these remarks, which were punctuated by several exclamations of Bayethe! Wena Waphakathi! or "Your Majesty! You of the Inner House!", the king acknowledged the Zionist interpretation of the special religious role of the monarchy. Speaking in a very light-hearted tone, the King pointed out that he is the spokesman of the Swazi in heaven:

We [the monarchs] are God's Headmen here on earth. When the Headman is left behind, who will represent you in heaven? We have to inform the nation tomorrow [Easter Sunday] that it has now been resolved by this assembly that your king will go to heaven by virtue of his status as

God's Headman. (Lunyawo LwaJesu, March 30, 1991: Archives of Swaziland Broadcasting and Information Services).

Although this principle was presented in a jovial manner, it underscores the major rhetoric of the Easter ritual in which the Swazi dual monarchs are defined as the undisputed leaders of the Christian church, on one hand, and also as divinely appointed leaders whose injunctions are binding on all. For the churches, the implication of this tenet is that they should support and defend Swazi kingship from its potential enemies.

However, the difficulty obscured by this dominant rhetoric is that it has not yet been adopted in word or deed by the better educated Swazi clergy belonging to the more influential mission churches which administer most of the basic educational and medical services in the country. Despite the fact that the Easter ceremony was established by the king more than fifty years ago, and the intense nationalistic overtones of the discourse, most leading mission churches still ignore or shun the ritual. This factor is made more pronounced by their negligible role at the Easter Sunday session, which is the main day of the ritual when the close relationship between the monarchy and the Zionist churches is affirmed through discourse and non-discursive symbolism.

The Easter Sunday Session

On Easter Sunday morning at about 11.00 o'clock all Swazi Christians are expected to converge at Somhlolo National Stadium to celebrate with the Swazi royalty the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The significance of the event is underscored by its coverage by the local press, the Government radio station and television journalists. The local press emphasizes the 'interdenominational' composition of this session, and describes this rite as "a national prayer service" (The Swazi News, 18 April 1992, p.1) or "a traditional Easter Sunday worship" (The Swazi Observer, 21 April 1992, p.1). But for the participating Zionist clergy and laity "the Easter ritual is a royal function" (cf. Interview with a Zionist Bishop at Ludzidzini royal residence, April 16, 1992). The truth of the latter statement is borne out by the proceedings of the Easter Sunday ritual in which the royalty are not simply distinguished guests but also serve as active cultural interpreters for the occasion.

Until 1973, this session was normally held under the gum trees at the precincts of the queen mother's residence at Lobamba. But beginning in 1974, King Sobhuza II recommended that the Easter Sunday service should be held at the Somhlolo National Stadium, a stadium that was named after King Somhlolo, and which was specifically built for the Independence Celebrations of 1968. According to Sobhuza, the reason for the change of venue was to enable

the Swazi Zionists to celebrate Jesus' resurrection in conjunction with political independence from British colonial rule:

I decided that we should come here today because this is where we regained our independence. Yet we have not yet given the hero, called Jesus, the opportunity to perform his victory dance in this stadium. Therefore I have decided that this hero should perform his victory dance here. (Easter Sunday, April 14, 1974: Archives of Swaziland Broadcasting and Information Services).

King Sobhuza went on to liken the growth and resilience of the Zionist churches to the heroic victory of Jesus, and asserted that the spirit of Jesus is alive in the Zionist processions and dances:

We talk about Jesus who died many years ago. We all know that he died long ago. . . But I say to you Jesus is here. As you are gathered here today you have come to witness and acknowledge the victory of Jesus. You have not come to watch the victory dance of a dead person. You have come to witness the victory dance of a living person. . . Did you see the long-winding procession that started at Lobamba [palace] and ended here at the stadium? Did you not realize that that was Jesus? (Easter Sunday, April 14, 1974: Archives of Swaziland Broadcasting and Information Services).

This astute comment by King Sobhuza encapsulates the distinctive role of the Easter Sunday session, namely, to dramatize - rather than explain - the interconnection between Jesus' triumph over death and the victory of cultural nationalism over 'foreign' elements which threatened the survival of the Kingdom of Swaziland. Indeed the characteristic feature of the Sunday rite is that it dramatizes and affirms this conviction largely by means of pomp and

celebration rather than by argumentation. Significantly, the principal actors in this "social drama" (Turner 1988:37) are the Zionist churches and the royalty.

The most manifest symbolic role of the Zionist churches in this rite is the sheer numerical force of the multitude of Zionist Christians from different regions of the country who occupy almost all the available seats at the Somhlolo National Stadium. With the exception of several rows of seats in the grandstand for the few clergy from mission churches, visiting black pastors from South Africa, leading political elites, and the royalty, all participants in this 60,000 person capacity stadium are Zionists resplendent in multi-coloured costumes and wooden crosses.

As I noted above, the Sunday session begins with a long procession from the queen mother's residence to the stadium, which is about a kilometre distant from the Ludzidzini residence. Each Zionist denomination is led by its leader or leaders, and along the way to the stadium each group sings its own songs and performs its distinctive dance until its members are seated in the stadium. En route to the stadium some Zionist will be "possessed" by the Holy Spirit and start speaking in tongues. These participants can reveal malevolent forces aimed at the monarchy. In fact, this procession constitute a ritual purification of the stadium prior to the arrival of the king and the queen mother. As Sundkler (1976:230) and Kuper (1978a:157) note, this mystical, 'protective' role of the Zionist pastors has been consistently encouraged by the monarchy.

In addition to their procession, singing, dancing and prophesying, the Zionist clergy are the principal religious officials of the Easter Sunday session. The clergyman in charge of the service is the president of the League of African Churches in Swaziland, and the liturgy of the entire occasion has a distinctive 'Zionist' texture, evidenced by songs of "fortification" and rhetoric about the Christian royalty. For example when the queen mother arrives at the stadium, she is 'greeted' with the special song I quoted above called Siyakudvumisa or "We praise you King of Kings," which is sung repeatedly until she is seated in the royal booth in the grandstand. The same practice is repeated at the end of the service and during this time the queen mother returns the affection of the crowd by dancing briefly before she finally leaves the stadium.

There is also a special song for King Mswati which is sung upon his arrival and departure from the stadium. This song is entitled Siyabonga Jesu or "Thank you Jesus", and it goes thus:

We thank you Jesus
 For such boundless grace,
 Of coming to the world
 To die for us sinners.
 We shall salute you with our hands,
 Worship you with our knees,
 Praise you with our mouths,
 For such boundless grace.

This song has now become "the King's song," and in his annual Easter Sunday speech, King Mswati normally begins his address by leading the

nation in singing the song. While this gesture is a radical departure from 'tradition,' in which the king maintained the cultural distance between his office and Christian belief and practices, the response of the participants is very spirited. Like the queen mother's song, this simple song acquires a significant meaning in the context of protocol and pomp that accompanies the arrival of the king. The pomp surrounding this occasion includes recitations of royal praise poetry, the king's dignified limousines, and the impressive police and army escort for the king. In this setting the collective "effervescence" (Durkheim 1915: 250) that obtains during the ecstatic singing of this song blurs the distinction between the grace of Jesus and the king's affection for the Swazi.

In addition to the special songs for the queen mother and the king, there is another symbolic song designed for this occasion entitled Wenhliziyu Yami, whose theme is "My heart be wary of your enemies". This is a hymn of ritual fortification which is sung before the king makes his speech at the Easter Sunday session. This solemn song bears a striking resemblance to the Incwala "songs of isolation" in which the commoners dramatize their 'empathy' and 'unswerving support' for the king who is 'deserted' by his kinsmen. Likewise, this song presents the king as an infinite target of malevolent forces:

My heart be wise,
Your enemies surround you,
They turn against you.
Watch and pray,
Do not stop fighting,

Ask God daily for strength.
Do not discard your weapons,
Until you complete your mission at death.
Amen! Amen! Amen! Amen! Amen!

Although the allusion to "enemies" in the above song is generalized, there are is no doubt that the Zionist churches see themselves as the trusted allies, rather than the enemies, of the monarchs. This fact is not only demonstrated by the enthusiastic participation of the Zionists throughout the session, but is also evident from the sermons of the Zionist clergy.

The style and rhetoric of the Zionist sermons at the Easter Sunday assembly are remarkably similar to those of the Good Friday session. Five Zionist pastors are asked to read and preach on selected portions of Scripture concerning the resurrection appearances Jesus to his disciples. These selected verses are John 20.1 and 16; John 20.11 and 16; Luke 24.13 and 31; John 20.19 and 29; John 21.1 and 12. Like the speakers at the Good Friday session, every Zionist speaker begins with the formal deferential salutation to the royalty, "Bayethe! You of the Inner House!"; and the invariable theme of the sermons is to extol the virtues of the "Christian" royal house. This doctrine is always presented as a vindication of the monarchs or the royal ancestors.

For example, in his commentary on John 21.15-18 in which Jesus repeatedly asks Peter "Do you love me?", one Zionist pastor in 1975 described the Swazi as a fortunate nation which is led by the "the king who loves God

and us"; and he contended that the resurrected Lord also appeared to King Somhlolo through a dream (Easter Sunday, March 28, 1975: Archives of Swaziland Broadcasting and Information Services). Other speakers use this forum to castigate mission churches for their divisive doctrines, especially their condemnation of ancestral religion. A case in point is this commentary by a Zionist pastor during the Easter Sunday of 1975, who interpreted the text from John 21:1 and 12 thus:

If we were united, all Christian denominations would have come here on this important day in which we meet with our king and visitors from other nations. Amen! My concern is that we are not united. Something is missing. Let us get closer to our customs. Then we shall be united. Today's ceremony which we call a "celebration", is a remembrance day for Jesus. Similarly, we should remember our ancestors, even though we are told that if we worship them we will be forsaken by God. Amen! That is not true. Everybody rises from the dead. I say to you all, let us re-unite with the God of the Swazi as well as with our ancestors (Easter Sunday, March 28, 1975: Archives of Swaziland Broadcasting and Information Services).

I cite this Zionist commentary on the resurrection of Jesus to underscore the fact the Zionist rhetoric about the "Christian" royalty is inherently dialectically opposed to mission churches. The address highlights the underlying principle of the Easter ritual, namely, that Swazi tradition as defined by the monarchy ought to be the unifying force of the Swazi nation. As another Zionist during the same Easter Sunday ritual put it: "We should first love our king

before we can love an unseen God" (Easter Sunday, March 28, 1975: Archives of Swaziland Broadcasting and Information Services).

This rhetoric, however, contrasts sharply with the detached and dispassionate speeches by many Swazi clergy belonging to mission churches. For example, in the programme for the Sunday service, the selected Zionist pastors are followed by "other speakers", who normally include about two attending pastors from mission churches, and one or two visiting pastors from foreign countries, most of whom are black pastors from South Africa. Here, the Swazi clergy from mission churches, who are usually hand-picked from the audience, normally make short, dispassionate speeches which focus primarily on the spiritual or personal implications of the Easter celebration.

In fact, many of the Swazi clergy from mission churches primarily participate in their official capacity as representatives of specific ecumenical Christian organisations such as the Council of Swaziland Churches and the Conference of Churches in Swaziland. Many mission churches continue to conduct their own parallel Easter services or annual conventions. For example, evangelical churches normally participate in the Sunrise Easter Sunday ritual in which different Christian Churches gather at a hill-top in Manzini, about 30 kilometres from the royal village, to celebrate the resurrection Jesus Christ.

Thus the Swazi clergy belonging to mission churches are not only regarded as guests but also feel like outsiders. From my conversations and

interviews in 1992 with many clergy from different mission churches such as the Methodist Church, Church of the Nazarene, the Africa Evangelical Church, the Lutheran Church, and the Roman Catholic Church, it became clear that in addition to the fact that the clergy from the mission churches are actually excluded from the preparations for the entire Easter ceremony, most of them claim that the Easter ceremony is a Zionist ritual, and that they feel alienated by being designated as "guests" at the ceremony. On the other hand, literally all of them feel it necessary to distance themselves from the ceremony as long as the ceremony is still planned and coordinated from the Swazi royal house.

Despite this subtle tension, however, the predominant climate of the Easter Sunday session is to celebrate the bond between the Zionist churches and the royalty. This festival is enhanced by the customary jovial speech by the king in which he identifies himself with the Christian congregation, and also highlights the utilitarian value of the Easter ceremony. As a Christian, the king leads the participants in the singing of his favourite song, and commends the Christian religion and the Easter ritual for all Swazi. For example, in his comment on his favourite song whose theme is to praise Jesus for His unlimited grace, the king says:

I deeply thank you all for today's occasion. If the Swazi nation continues to observe this function, God in Heaven will bless us. To remember God is vital to the nation and to the world at large because a nation that remembers God will obtain great blessings. Such a nation will be

fortunate and successful, and live in peace because it is God who brings peace ... Therefore I wish to emphasize that this ceremony is extremely important and we should respect it at all times (Easter Sunday, March 31, 1991: Archives of Swaziland Broadcasting and Information Services).

The king also uses this forum to comment on current political events.

For instance, in 1992 the king urged Christians to pray for the Tinkhundla Review Commission, the committee that he decreed to reassess the current 'traditional' form of government called Tinkhundla. In his reference to constitutional debate, the king likens the prevailing tension between the state and the "democracy movement" described in the previous chapter to the trials of the biblical Job, the good and righteous man who was tempted by Satan. The king urges the Christians to stay firm in their support for the state in spite of the turmoil surrounding the demands by various political groups for the reinstatement of the Westminster model of democracy in Swaziland (Easter Sunday, April 19 1992: Archives of Swaziland Broadcasting and Information Services).

The king's speech is then followed by the Umnikelo Wesihle or the Voluntary Offering in which the participants - save the king, the queen mother, the queens - make cash donations. This practice takes the form of a long queue of Zionists Christians, the visiting clergy, and the attending political elites, all walking towards a table at the centre of the stadium where each

willing participant puts his or her own donation. As the participants give their donations, a special song is sung called Malihambe Ivangeli or Forward with Evangelism. This money is used, among other things, for the customary gifts to the queen mother and the king on Monday and Tuesday respectively.

Like all official national celebrations, the Easter Sunday session is concluded through the singing of the national anthem. Fittingly, the national anthem advocates the basic theme of the Easter ceremony, namely giving thanks to God for the blessings of the country, the main endowment being the Swazi monarchy. As well the national anthem is a prayer beseeching God to "stabilize and strengthen the Swazi nation".

God the creator of the blessings of the Swazi,
 We are grateful for all the fortunes.
 We are grateful for our king,
 The nation, mountains, and rivers.
 Bless the leaders of the land of King Ngwane.
 You only are our omnipotent God.
 Give us wisdom which is without deceit.
 Stabilize and strengthen us, Everlasting God. (My Translation).

Following the national anthem, the Sunday service is closed with a benediction given by the president of the League of African Churches in Swaziland, the Zionist official who is also the master of ceremonies for the Sunday session. However, the ceremony is not over until the royalty leaves the stadium. Thus the king is the first to leave, followed by the queen mother, the queens, royal councillors, the prime minister, and other senior political leaders

such as the ministers of Home Affairs and Immigration, Foreign Affairs, and the Regional Administrators of the Kingdom.

As was the case at beginning of the Sunday session, the pomp and ceremony that accompany the departure of the king and his mother is reinforced by the exuberance of the Zionists, as the special "songs of sacralization" are performed for the dual monarchs. When all dignitaries have left the stadium, the Zionists leave the stadium in groups in the same way as they came in. Different Zionist denominations sing and dance to their own distinctive songs as the participants disperse to their respective homes.

Although the Easter ceremony is not formally over until the Zionist leaders have bid farewell to the queen mother and the king on Monday and Tuesday, many participants regard the Sunday session as the final day of the ceremony. Nonetheless, for most Zionist church leaders the farewell sessions are significant because this is the time for giving a 'report' about the Easter ritual in general, and notifying the king about deceased Zionist pastors. In return, the king and the queen mother attest to the value of these briefings by their personal presence and expression of appreciation to the Zionist clergy for conducting this annual ritual.

The Monday Session

On Monday afternoon Zionist church leaders go to the queen mother's residence at Ludzidzini royal village to bid her farewell. In keeping with customary etiquette befitting guests of the royalty, the Zionist pastors present an undisclosed amount of money as a gift to the queen mother. But the queen mother is also met in her capacity as a patron of the Zionist churches, hence the Zionist leaders give a general report on the proceedings of the Easter ceremony. In 1992, the vital issue in this report was the then newly elected executive committee of the League of African Churches in Swaziland (LACS). As I noted above, this committee is responsible, among other things, for the planning and management of the Easter ritual in collaboration with the monarchy.

In her customary address on this occasion, the queen mother in 1992 acknowledged the new leaders of the "League" or the LACS and also praised all Zionist pastors and their followers for their participation in "this great function which was on your shoulders". Significantly, the queen mother described the annual commitment of all the Zionist participants to the Easter ceremony as divinely inspired:

We are very grateful and we praise you immensely. We pray that God continues to give you the love that He gave you long ago, namely that during this time of the year we all worship together. We are also grateful to our foreign visitors who are also moved by God to participate in this

occasion (Easter Monday, April 20, 1992: Archives of Swaziland Broadcasting and Information Services).

Regarding the duty of the church leaders in contemporary Swazi society, the queen mother pointed out that the pastors ought to serve as role models and defenders of the realm during this critical time when "our children have begun to rebel against us". Referring to the prevailing political climate in which many urban Swazi were calling for the radical overhaul of the Swazi political structure, the queen mother urged the pastors to support the existing political system:

I ask God to continue to be with you, elevate you, and give you the strength since He chose you to be sowers of the seed of the Gospel. I Ask God to give you the strength, ladies and gentlemen. As the Child [the king] pointed out yesterday, I ask you to continue to pray for the nation. Indeed many of you have already pointed out that there are disturbances in the nation, and our children have begun to rebel against us. But nothing is greater than to pray and present our problems to God (Easter Monday, March 20, 1992: Archives of Swaziland Broadcasting and Information Services).

The fact that the monarchy regards the Zionist leaders and their followers as reliable allies against political agitators is made even more clear in the king's meeting with the Zionists pastors on Tuesday.

Tuesday Session: Ligcolo or the Mourning Gift for the King

Like the farewell rite with the queen mother, this session serves to cement the strong ties between Zionist church leaders and the king. On this

occasion the Zionist church leaders gather at Lozitha Palace, the king's residence, to bid him farewell and to give a report about the number and names of Zionist pastors who have died since the last Easter ceremony. Since the king is the head of the Zionist church, the death of a Zionist clergyman is likened to the death of a member of the emabutfo or the regiments. As a result, the church leaders have to express their condolences to the king for his loss of a 'regiment member', and a gift of cash is presented to the king as a token of sympathy.

Indeed in his customary speech, the king, in turn, expresses his condolences to the bereaved but also "beatifies" the departed Zionist clergy, either by bestowing upon them the honour of being described as national heroes or as intermediaries between the living Zionists and God. For example, in 1990, the king fondly referred to the deceased pastors as "great heroes":

Concerning the sad news about those clergy who are no longer with us, there is nothing we can say except that the Omnipotent one has taken them. We hope that they will sleep well. We will always remember them as great heroes (Liqcolo, April 17, 1990: Archives of Swaziland Broadcasting and Information Services).

In 1992 the king went a step further by 'beatifying' the deceased Zionist clergy, comparing them to saints who can serve as intermediaries between God and mankind:

As for the Ligcolo [mourning gift] that you have presented concerning the departed clergy, it is indeed a sad circumstance. We hope that they will sleep in peace. But I do hope that they will intercede on your behalf in heaven. (Ligcolo, April 17, 1992: Archives of Swaziland Broadcasting and Information Services).

However, despite this amicable bond between Zionists leaders and the monarchs, the latter are very concerned about the continued absence of mission churches from the Easter function. To be sure, this concern is shared by many Zionist pastors as I have shown in my description of the other sessions of the Easter ritual. But this problem of mission churches becomes even more distinct when seen from the perspective of the king's remarks made in 1990 at a Tuesday farewell session:

I wish to thank you, reverends, for the work that you have done. It was very good and I highly commend you for such a splendid function. Any function, ladies and gentlemen, requires diligent handling lest it gets spoiled. Like this one, reverends, as I asked last year, where are the other reverends? I have now realized the reason why the king [Sobhuza II] established this Christian ceremony. The reason was to enable all Swazi reverends to meet and discuss the Bible so that they may eventually resolve their differences and discover the truth. My question then is, if they do not come here to meet with other reverends how can truth be discovered? When we went to the National Church for the Good Friday service the other churches were nowhere to be seen. One would expect the other churches to join with us on such an occasion so that we meet as one. Ladies and gentlemen, I hope you will look into this issue. I noted this problem last year but I do not see any changes. (Ligcolo, April 17, 1990: Archives of Swaziland Broadcasting and Information Services).

This crucial remark made by King Mswati III underscores three salient roles of the Easter ritual in contemporary Swazi society. Firstly, the king's remarks, taken together with the 'Christianized' interpretation of the legend about King Somhlolo's dream, suggest that the Easter ritual can be rightly called an invented tradition in the Hobsbawmian sense of the term (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983:1-15). Hobsbawm's concept of the invention of tradition denotes the deliberate manipulation of 'traditional symbols' by political leaders for the purpose of presenting a new political ideology as continuous with the pristine traditions from the past. In the case of ex-colonial countries, these pristine traditions are often depicted as having been undermined by colonial rule.

Like many traditions which are invented by political groups in newly independent countries like New Zealand (cf. Hanson 1989:890-902) and Vanuatu in the South Pacific (Philibert 1990:251-273), the Easter ritual attempts to present the Swazi royal ancestors such as King Somhlolo I and Sobhuza II as "Christian" rulers to whom God entrusted the guardianship of the Swazi Church. In fact, the communication between the Christian God and the royal ancestors is supposed to have predated the arrival of the missionaries with their "divisive" churches (cf. Kuper 1978:19-20). Thus an attempt is made to present the royalty as non-partisan, above denominational affiliations, and a symbol of both Christian solidarity and national harmony.

The second, albeit unintended, salient role of the Easter ritual which is highlighted by the king's remark is that the ritual reflects and reinforces the continuing tension between the monarchy and mission churches. From the king's speech it is clear that the Swazi monarchy sees the participation of Swazi Christians in this ritual as mandatory, and that the non-participation of most of the clergy belonging to the mission churches is perceived as a political snub.

Indeed, one of the dominant values of Swazi culture is kuhlehla or the performance of tribute labour for the monarchy. Etymologically, the infinitive verb kuhlehla refers to a military dance (Kuper 1986:187). But in general usage the term refers to free services rendered by the Swazi to the king or the chiefs, and these chores include military duties, weeding and harvesting of the king's fields, and participation in royal ceremonies. All these acts, as I noted in the previous chapter, involve customary demonstrations of allegiance to royal rule as well as assent to the ideology of divine kingship (cf. Kuper 1972a). Non-participation in royal ceremonies, therefore, is culturally defined as treachery as well as a tacit rejection of the dominant ideology of the state.

With regard to the Easter ritual, then, my contention is that the selective participation or non-participation of the mission churches in the ritual is not inadvertent but part of an historical and systematic process of resistance to the dominant rhetoric of the Easter ritual. I maintain that this historical process in which mission churches defy the doctrine of divine kingship parallels the

continuing demand for political democracy by many urban commoners. As I noted in the previous chapter, the contemporary constitutional crisis in Swaziland is evidenced by the emergence of radical political parties and associations challenging the official policy of absolute kingship which flatly rejects Western forms of democratic governance.

Thus, the third salient aspect of Easter ritual is that it is dialectically related to the current attempts by many urban Swazi to reinstate the liberal Independence Constitution which provided for multi-party democracy. As I show in the next chapter, the Easter ritual can be seen as one of several neo-traditions invented by the monarchy in post-colonial Swaziland to forestall any radical changes in the country's political system. I also show that since Independence in 1968, the Easter ritual has served mainly as an invented tradition which embodies the official ideology of the state or "the public transcript" (Scott 1990:13) on the one hand; and, on the other hand, it has served as an invented tradition which stands in a dialectical relationship to the radical political actions pursued by many urban commoners who wish to reform the Swazi political system.

Thus, in summary, the three aspects of the Easter ritual to which I allude above point to the fact that this ceremony has not been a successful instrument of cultural integration, but rather that it promotes official political ideology. This ideology is resisted by many urban, educated commoners

through relatively safe, "anonymous" collective actions (Scott 1990:140-41) such as non-participation in royal ceremonies, critical pastoral letters by the clergy of mission churches, and the development of new political parties and associations which espouse universal human rights.

I now turn to the social context of the Easter ritual, stressing the dialectical relationship between the dominant rhetoric of the Easter ritual and those political actions which challenge the absolute rule of the Swazi monarchy.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE ROYAL EASTER RITUAL AND THE POLITICS OF TRADITION

The purpose of this chapter is to demonstrate the relationship between the Easter ritual and on-going political conflict between the Swazi ruling aristocrats and urban commoners over the distribution of political power. I show the link between the dominant theme of the royal Easter ritual and specific new traditions invented by the monarchy in post-colonial Swaziland (1968-1992) on the one hand, and the connection between the covert forms of resistance to the Easter ritual and non-religious forms of resistance to other new royal traditions on the other hand.

This description of the various contestations of royal neo-traditions by urban Swazi commoners leads to the main argument of this chapter, namely: that the royal Easter ritual has not been an integrative force in post-independence Swaziland as existing literature claims (cf. Kuper 1986a; Sundkler 1976). Rather, the royal Easter ritual has largely played a disruptive role in modern Swaziland in that its dominant theme has been invariably partisan and dialectically related to the political actions pursued by many urban commoners who strive for the reinstatement of Western-style democracy in Swaziland.

In this chapter I show that the Easter ritual, as an invented tradition (cf. Hobsbawm 1983), embodies the official ideology of cultural nationalism which affirms, among other things, the primacy of the Swazi monarchs as official interpreters of Swazi tradition and as authorized engineers of cultural change (cf. Kuper 1986a:132; Matsebula 1978:300). In practice, this ideology of cultural nationalism provides a rationale for the king to direct the processes of social change. According to Kuper (1986a), King Sobhuza II was adept at this task:

The success of this process of cultural nationalism depended on Sobhuza's skilful blending and balancing of a traditional Swazi infrastructure with Western symbols and of new Western organizations with Swazi symbols (1986a:132).

In addition, Kuper claims that despite the immense power of the monarchy in influencing cultural change, King Sobhuza II "did not desire or attempt to convert a sacred kingship into a dictatorship, secular or sacred" (1986:132).

In contrast to Kuper, however, I indicate that to many urban commoners, the neo-traditions invented by King Sobhuza to prohibit Western democracy were - and are still - perceived as repressive, self-serving, and partisan. Significantly, I demonstrate that many urban commoners have resisted these invented traditions through covert and public political actions.

By "political actions", as I mentioned earlier in this study, I refer to specific collective acts of resistance undertaken by various groups of urban commoners to question the absolute rule of the Swazi royalty. These collective actions include demonstrations, civil disobedience, public criticism of absolute rule by political activists, the critical social teachings of mission churches, the polemical discourses by mission churches at the Easter ritual, and the non-participation of many urban commoners in royal ceremonies.

Following Scott (1990), I contend that these collective acts of resistance are normally covert or anonymous largely because of the vulnerability of the commoners in the face of the absolute power of the monarchy (cf. Scott 1990:18). As current studies of the political history of Swaziland show, real political power has been held by the King - in collaboration with the political elites - who control Swazi Nation Land, Swazi Law and Custom, mineral rights, the Parliament, the civil service, and parastatal businesses (cf. Kuper 1972a:614; Jones 1977:253; Macmillan 1986:120).

Thus I begin this chapter by demonstrating that the royal Easter ritual in post-colonial Swaziland has been an invented tradition in the Hobsbawmian sense of the term; namely that the ritual advocates a specific political agenda which implies the deliberate manipulation of cultural symbols by political leaders for the purpose of exercising social control over an otherwise unstable social order (Hobsbawm 1983:4)¹. This discussion is followed by an analysis of the

role of the Easter ritual in the political conflict between the monarchy and the urban commoners. I relate the Easter ritual to other non-religious, newly invented traditions which embody the official ideology of Swaziland, and I stress that the main political problem addressed by these invented traditions has been the determination by many urban Swazi to reinstate a liberal Westminster style of democracy which would compromise the absolute power of the monarchy.

I show that the dominant theme of the Easter ritual, like other new traditions invented by the royalty, has been dialectically opposed to various forms of contestation of the monarchy. By way of specific examples, I select three crucial historical phases in post-colonial Swaziland in which the conflict between the monarchy and the commoners has become particularly explicit.

The first of these events was initiated by the 1973 Decree in which King Sobhuza II outlawed party-politics and depicted the Westminster form of parliamentary democracy as divisive and incompatible with the Swazi way of life (cf. Matsebula 1987:261; Kuper 1978a:235). The second historical period begins with the death of King Sobhuza II in 1982 and ends with the coronation of King Mswati III in 1986. This phase was characterized by, among other things, the widespread abuse of the absolute power of the monarchy by the 'traditional' elites on the one hand (Kuper 1986a:165-173), and growing discontent among many urban Swazi which was signified in part by the formation of underground political movements calling for the restoration of

democracy in Swaziland on the other hand (Africa Confidential, January 16, 1985). The third phase begins with the reign of King Mswati III since 1986 which has been characterized by the intransigence of the Swazi rulers in the face of the calls by many urban commoners for political democracy.

For each of these phases of post-colonial Swazi history, I draw on my field data which include transcripts of the royal Easter ritual during these periods, pastoral and social teachings of some mission churches, newspaper reports, and interviews with different church leaders and the laity. I use these data to show that the Easter ritual - like other new traditions invented by the Swazi aristocrats - has been consistently resisted by many Swazi largely because its ideology has not been compatible with the goals and interests of many urban commoners.

Significantly, in the last section of this chapter I indicate the place of the Easter ritual in the continuum of numerous forms of resistance by many urban commoners to the Swazi royalty. I demonstrate and argue that the different forms of political dissent expressed to the Swazi monarchy range from non-participation in royal ceremonies, polemical discourses, pastoral teachings, and civil disobedience, to overt political opposition. Thus in contrast to existing studies which stress the contribution of the Easter ritual to the preservation of Swazi cultural unity (Sundkler 1976:243), and its role in fostering amicable church-state relations in post-colonial Swaziland (Kuper 1986a:142-144), I

argue that the dominant theme of the Easter ritual represents a politicized, religious ideology which has not been broadly accepted by many Swazi Christians over the years. I now turn to the analytical discussion of the political dimension of the Easter ritual in post-colonial Swaziland.

The Political Agenda of the Easter Ritual

The Easter ritual, as I have shown in the previous chapter, has been essentially directed by the Swazi royalty, and it can rightly be called an invented tradition. The concept of "the invention of tradition" is used by Hobsbawm, Ranger, and Cannadine (1983) specifically to denote the creation - by political leaders such as colonialists, political elites of new nations, emperors, and kings - of new traditions of social control which are nonetheless made to appear to be continuous with ancient or historical traditions (Hobsbawm 1983:1; Ranger 1983: 211; Cannadine 1983:105).

Hobsbawm (1983) in particular, identifies two distinguishing features of invented traditions which can be used to illustrate the political import of the Swazi Easter ritual. The first mark of invented traditions, according to Hobsbawm, is that they are actually new social practices which are constructed, instituted, and rationalized on the grounds that they are continuous with the past. As soon as they have been created, these new social practices become ritualized and supposedly immutable, and this invariance is justified on the

grounds that such practices conform with immutable tradition. Yet, the link between the new tradition and the historic past is "largely factitious" (Hobsbawm 1983:1-2).

The second significant feature of invented traditions is their historical context, namely that such practices are created during periods of radical social change such as industrialization, colonial rule, and the establishment of new independent nations, wherein formerly integrative cultural symbols and institutions have become parochial and redundant. These rapid changes create the need for the adaptation of the traditional symbols to serve as revamped integrative symbols for new purposes in new contexts (Hobsbawm 1983:4-5).

As an invented tradition, the Easter ritual attempts to overhaul the religious role of the monarchs in post-independence Swaziland by constructing an 'historical' link between the Swazi royal ancestors and the Christian churches. First, it must be remembered that during the colonial period (1894-1968) the Swazi Easter ritual was mainly used as an anti-colonial symbol of resistance, and the Swazi monarchs could not, and did not, convert to Christianity since conversion was seen as incompatible with their sacred duties as the ultimate national priests (Kuper 1947b:109-110). Thus, while the Easter ritual in the colonial era depicted the king as the head of the Zionist churches (Kuper 1947b:125; 1986a:71), a clear distinction was maintained between the office of kingship and the Christian religion.

However, following political independence in 1968, the king was no longer the "Paramount Chief" in charge of black Swazi, but was then the king of all Swazi, black, coloured, and white, Christian and non-Christian (cf. Kuper 1972a:608-609). More importantly, the post-colonial culture of Swaziland has been characterized by "a strong cultural dualism" in which some elements of European culture co-existed with Swazi customs. This dualism, for example, is reflected in the co-existence of two legal systems, namely European common law (Roman-Dutch Law) which is the general law of Swaziland, and customary law which applies to black Swazi. Swazi customary law is administered by the king, chiefs, headmen, and other traditional leaders (Armstrong and Nhlapo 1985:2-4).

Since customary law is subordinate to the general European law, a black Swazi is not entirely bound by customary law, and can choose to live by either of the two legal systems (Armstrong and Nhlapo 1985:3). However, in exceptional cases of a political nature the king can overrule a decision made by the highest court of law (cf. Kuper 1986a:124-126). As Armstrong and Nhlapo correctly point out, this dual system can be burdensome to the ordinary black Swazi, especially to women, when Western law is overlooked in preference to customary law that favours dominant social groups like traditional leaders and men (Armstrong and Nhlapo 1985:3-4).

However, this cultural dualism has also been problematic to the monarchy. As I pointed out in Chapter Two, the dualistic social structure has affected many vital aspects of Swazi social life such as education, employment, religion, and allegiance to the monarchy. In this new post-colonial context, the Easter ritual portrayed the Swazi monarchs as the transcendent guarantors of the various Christian churches in Swaziland. For instance, King Sobhuza II continued to place himself above denominational affiliation. He did not claim to be a Christian, and he maintained that the Christian religion "merely fans the embers" of indigenous Swazi beliefs in God (Thanksgiving Service, September 8, 1968: Archives of Swaziland Broadcasting and Information Services).

As I showed in the previous chapter, the main theme of the Easter ritual during the post-colonial era has been to give credit to the royal ancestor King Somhlolo - and not to the missionaries - for his God-given insight concerning the coming of the gospel to Swaziland as well as for his directive to the Swazi that they should accept the Bible. The significance of this popular legend lies in the fact that God disclosed the coming of the Christian religion to the founding ancestor of the Swazi nation. This narrative reinforces the indigenous doctrine of divine kingship which portrays former Swazi kings as national ancestors and guardians of the Swazi nation (cf. Kuper 1947b:110).

That the monarchy placed itself above the churches and all other religious groups becomes clear from King Sobhuza's speech during the Easter

Sunday ceremony of 1974. Here the king described the Easter ritual as an interreligious ceremony which ought to include other religious beliefs such as Islam and the Baha'i Faith:

We have come here to witness the heroic dance of Jesus. Some of you will wonder why the Muslims, the Bahais, and others are invited to a Christian ceremony. Such people do not know what they are saying. What I know is that the emabutfo [regiments] perform in different regimental groups and the hero will emerge from such competitive groups. Thus, when different religious groups come here, they do so because they acknowledge the heroism of Jesus. (Easter Sunday, April 14, 1974: Archives of S.B.I.S).

Although this interreligious perspective was not necessarily shared by the Swazi church leaders, it nonetheless indicates the broader goals of the monarchy, that is, to present the Swazi royalty as 'historical' custodians of all religions in Swaziland, including ancestral religion and Christianity. Indeed, the supposed historical link between the Swazi royalty and the Christian church has been given more impetus in contemporary Easter ceremonies which depict King Mswati III and his mother as Christian rulers who follow in the footsteps of the other Christian royal ancestors such as Kings Somhlolo and Sobhuza II. As I have shown in Chapter Four, King Mswati III and the queen mother do not only claim to be Christian but also attempt to preach and convert their subjects to Christianity. Hence a new tradition has been created, namely that the monarchs are not simply tolerant of all religious beliefs, but also that they are fervent advocates of the Christian faith.

Yet the most important aspect of this invented tradition concerning the Christian royalty is that it is positively affirmed and propounded by most Zionist clergy at the Easter ritual. As a result, this invented tradition became standardized through repetition. This process underscores the other characteristic feature of most invented traditions in the Hobsbawmian sense, namely, their invariance.

The second feature of the royal Easter ritual which fits the general characteristics of invented traditions is the inflexible nature of both the organizational structure and the dominant theme of the ceremony. As I noted above, the Easter ritual has been dominated by the royalty and Zionists since its inception in 1937, and its main theme has been remarkably consistent in its defence of the official state ideology of cultural nationalism. The dominant theme of the Easter ritual, as indicated in Chapter Four, has been that obedience to the injunctions of the monarchy will ensure God's blessing for the entire Swazi nation.

In fact, this dominant rhetoric of the Easter ritual is in some important respects a religious translation of the key political rhetoric of the state, which portrays the absolute rule of the monarchy as the rational alternative to "divisive" and "disruptive" Western democracy. As I showed through the transcripts of some of the speeches of the Easter ritual cited in the previous chapter, the main focus of the Easter ritual has been to link the peace, stability,

and development of Swaziland with the capable leadership of the divinely appointed Swazi monarchy.

This link between the Easter ritual and official political rhetoric has been reinforced by the fact that, on the one hand, the Zionist church leaders who participate in the Easter ritual were depicted by the royalty as model representatives and bearers of Swazi 'tradition'; while, on the other hand, the royal representatives at the Easter ritual, who play a crucial role in shaping the political agenda of the ritual, are also leading political elites in the kingdom.

These royal representatives at the Easter ritual include the governor of the Ludzidzini royal residence, Councillor Mngayi Fakudze who can be called the "traditional prime minister" of Swaziland by virtue of his position as the leading indvuna or councillor who resides at the royal capital (Kuper 1986a:35). Indeed he is seen by many as wielding more political power than that of the cabinet prime minister (The Weekend Sun, 21 Feb. 1992, p.3). The second important royal representative at the Easter ritual is the current liaison officer between the monarchy and the churches, Mr. A. K. Hlophe, who is a senior royal councillor with a long record of loyal service to the Swazi state in various capacities. Mr. Hlophe was a leading member of the Swazi National Council, a long-serving cabinet minister under King Sobhuza's political party (Grotperter 1975:52), a former member of the Liqogo or the Supreme Council of State which ruled the country following the death of King Sobhuza in 1982 (Kuper

1986a:161), and he is the alleged current chairman of the Inner Royal Council - popularly dubbed the "Central Committee" - which advises the present King Mswati III (The Times of Swaziland, 29 March 1992, p.1).

Thus, in order to understand the partisan nature of the Easter ritual, it is necessary to situate the ritual in its historical context. In what follows, then, I show that the invariant rhetoric of the Easter ritual - which apotheosizes the monarchy and glorifies its social function - is related to other political neo-traditions invented by the Swazi royalty for the purpose of preserving the absolute rule of the monarchy. But more importantly, however, I also indicate the other 'permanent' aspect of this process of the invention of tradition in Swaziland, namely that it is resisted not only by political groups but also by many Swazi belonging to mission churches.

The Repeal of the Westminster Constitution (1973) and the Invention of the Tinkhundla System of Government

The political motivation of the King's Decree of 1973 has been ascertained by many scholars. To many, the King's Decree of 1973 was designed to thwart the growing political opposition from many urban Swazi workers who were attracted to the socialist political ideology of the Ngwane National Liberatory Congress (cf. Potholm 1974:226; Winter 1978:35; Viecelli 1982:58; N. Simelane 1986:147-149). As Viecelli points out, the primary

objective of the 1973 Decree was to liquidate opposition parties and trade union movements since these associations enjoyed the support of many urban Swazi workers, especially Swazi employed and residing in industrial towns. These persons enjoyed a certain degree of freedom from aristocratic domination in that they were not entirely dependent on Swazi Nation Land for their economic sustenance. As I indicated earlier, Swazi communal land was, and still is, controlled by the Swazi aristocrats (1982:58). Thus, the King's Decree did not simply prohibit party-politics, but it effectively handicapped the trade union movement since all meetings held by trade unions had to be approved by the commissioner of police in advance (Viecelli 1982:59; N. Simelane 1986:149).

That the Decree of April 1973 was not simply an act of Swazi as opposed to European custom, but primarily an internal dialectic between the aristocrats and urban commoners is also evidenced by the fact the King's Decree ignored other more basic 'disruptive' modern practices arising from the free market economy. As many writers point out, critical problems facing post-colonial Swaziland included the following: unequal development between urban and rural sectors, the domination by the white settlers of the modern Swazi economy, unemployment and the dependence on migrant labour, and the creation of a poorly paid Swazi working class which was dissatisfied with the complicity between the aristocrats and foreign and white settler capitalists who

dominated the economy of the country (Potholm 1974:225; Winter 1978:34-35; Viecelli 1992:59; Stephen 1986:193-194).

As Stephen points out, political conflicts in modern Swaziland tend to revolve around the competition among the Swazi themselves for administrative "position[s] of patronage as senior national partner[s] of foreign investment" (1986:201). Such opportunities are accompanied by special privileges for the ruling political elite such as investment opportunities and access to the state revenue accruing from taxation, trade, parastatal businesses, and foreign investments (Stephen 1986:202-216; cf. Winter 1978:42).

Thus, while the decree of 1973 and the institutionalization of the Tinkhundla system were presented as a 'return' to the past, the directionality of this action was intentionally congruent with the basic cornerstone of Western custom, namely, the free market economy. As existing literature shows, the Swazi 'traditional' elite has been, and can be seen as an active participant in the capitalist economy in the capacity of a social group with specific economic and political interests (cf. Winter 1978:33; Stephen 1986:200-201). Therefore, the 1973 decree and the new 'Swazi constitution' which was later embodied in the Tinkhundla political system cannot be construed simply as a reflection of the "pervasive hold of the traditional authority on the [Swazi] population" as Potholm suggests (1974:221); but this constitution can also be seen as the triumph of Swazi ruling aristocrats over the urban commoners in the competition

for control of state power with its attendant economic and political privileges. As Howard points out, "the state in Africa is the key not only to power and prestige, but to privilege, wealth and, in some cases, mere subsistence" (1986:37).

Like the Tinkhundla tradition, the theory and practice of the Easter ritual of the 1970's reflected the political agenda of most of the traditions invented by the Swazi royalty since the 1973 decree. In the first place, the Easter ritual of 1975 - for instance - depicted the king and the royal capital as the new religio-political centre of the Swazi nation. For Kuper and Sundkler this symbolism of the monarch and the royal capital as the religio-political fulcrum of Swazi society represented an ingenuous blending of Swazi tradition and the Western Christian religion ostensibly for the general welfare of all Swazi (cf. Kuper 1986a:142; Sundkler 1976:242-243). However, in the light of the centralization of political power within the monarchy which accompanied the King's Decree of 1973, and the subsequent repressive measures pursued by the monarchy against its political opponents, it is significant to note that the Easter ceremony depicted Swazi kingship as the only legitimate form of political authority which guaranteed the survival and the future prosperity of the Swazi nation.

To cite a specific example, on Easter Sunday of 1975, a Zionist pastor read the Gospel according to John 21:15-19 - the text in which Jesus

instructed Peter to administer the Church - and made the following remarks about the religious and social value of the Swazi monarchy:

Ladies and gentlemen, I wish to praise God on behalf of the land of King Ngwane [Swazi King 1750-1780] for the King we have in this country [Sobhuza II]. We have a King who has love. Just as Jesus enjoined Simon Peter to love and look after His Church, we in Swaziland are fortunate because we have a good kingdom which loves God and us. It is clear, then, that we are fortunate and that God loves us. We are particularly grateful to you, your Majesty the King. We pray to God that He preserve you and prolong your life because it is clear that if it was not for you, we would be orphans without a guardian, and without a nation. (Easter Sunday, March 28, 1975: Archives of Swaziland Broadcasting and Information Services).

As well, at the same ceremony in 1975, another Zionist pastor likened the royal capital residence of Lobamba to the biblical city of Jerusalem through which God's blessings to Swaziland would be bestowed. Commenting on the Gospel according to Luke 24:49-50 which refers to Jesus' promise to His disciples to send the Holy Spirit which would guide the church, the pastor assured the congregation that the Swazi nation would only be blessed if it honoured the royal capital through which God would confer prosperity to Swaziland.

Jerusalem was a great and respectable village. Similarly, we are very proud to be gathered here at Lobamba [royal capital], even our children know that we are at Lobamba. Likewise, Jesus' disciples were instructed to remain in Jerusalem and await the promise and they accordingly waited, and eventually received the gift of the Holy Spirit, and they were blessed. Similarly, yesterday we were at

Lozitha [King Sobhuza's residence]. We witnessed good things because we were with our king. Hallelujah! (Easter Sunday, March 28, 1975: Archives of Swaziland Broadcasting and Information Services).

The fact that these politicised interpretations of the two resurrection narratives cited above were not accidental but in keeping with the official blueprint of the Easter ceremony becomes evident from the announcement made by the chief liaison officer between the monarchy and the churches at the same Easter Sunday ceremony in 1975. He reminded the Christians of their moral responsibility to participate in the remaining sessions of the Easter ritual such as the farewell prayer sessions at the queen mother's and the king's residences:

I wish to urge all of you gathered here today to be present tomorrow at Lobamba when we bid farewell to the queen mother; and also on Tuesday when we say farewell to the king at Lozitha Palace. It is indeed disheartening to see Swazi adults like ourselves deciding to return to our families without having made farewells to the king. This kind of behaviour makes one wonder if such adults are aware of their moral obligation or not. When you reach home, what will you say to your children if you have not seen your king? (Easter Sunday, March 28, 1975: Archives of Swaziland Broadcasting and Information Services).

However, in spite of this reminder about the social function of the Swazi churches, namely to support kingship at all times, many Swazi belonging to mission churches persisted in resisting this subtle coercion to legitimate the monarchy through committed participation in the Easter ritual. This observation

leads to the second similarity between the Tinkhundla tradition and the Easter ritual, namely, that like the Tinkhundla tradition which was instituted through the use of force and resisted by many urban Swazi, the dominant theme of the Easter ritual has been equally resisted by many Swazi clergy belonging to mission churches. This resistance to the Easter ritual of the mid-1970's by many Swazi clergymen was expressed three interrelated ways.

In the first place, the prevalent attitude of most Swazi leaders of mission churches toward the Easter ritual at the time was abstention from the ritual. The usual 'alibi' for non-participation was time constraints and the conflicting schedules of denominational Easter ritual services and the royal Easter ritual. The second form of resistance to the royal Easter ritual was through selective participation in the ceremony. For instance, some clergymen such as Catholic priests would conduct special prayer sessions for Catholic queens on Good Friday; while other clergy from the Jehovah's Witnesses Church and the Seventh Day Adventist Church chose to participate in the debating session called Lunyawo LwaJesu where their general aim was to "enlighten" the Zionists and "tell the king the Truth" (cf. Samketi 1975:105). Thus the underlying motive for the selective participation of the "mission Christians" was to distance themselves from or to contest the dominant theme of the Easter ritual through polemical discourse during the ritual context.

Indeed, in addition to the supposedly 'disruptive' sermons of the members of the Jehovah's Witnesses at the Easter ritual (cf. Sundkler 1976:236), other Swazi clergy affiliated to mission churches who participated in the Easter ritual during this period also claim that their motive for participating in the ritual was to preach the 'real Gospel' which supersedes and transforms Swazi culture. This polemical attitude became more evident during interviews conducted in 1992 with elderly Swazi clergymen belonging to mission churches such as the Methodist Church, the Anglican Church, the Roman Catholic Church, the Evangelical Lutheran Church, and the Church of the Nazarene. These mission Christians, who had individually participated in the Easter ceremonies of the late 1970's, maintained that for them the Easter ceremony was not "a royal function" as such, but a Christian celebration of the resurrection of Christ that transcends Swazi tradition and kingship.

While it would have been considered "unSwazi" and impudent for the Swazi clergy to express this view openly, some clergy did attempt to articulate their dissenting views during the Easter ritual. For example, on Easter Sunday in 1975, one Swazi clergyman gave a subtle critique of the dominant tendency on the part of the Zionist clergy to valorize the essential goodness and blessedness of the Swazi nation and its monarchy. Commenting on the biblical text from Mark 16:1-12 which refers to the discovery of the resurrection of Christ by his female disciples who had brought sweet perfumes to anoint Jesus'

body, the pastor stressed that Swazi claims to be God's beloved children must be accompanied by good works or sweet fragrance:

Brethren, people of God. If we love Jesus, and celebrate the Resurrection; and if we love our country and our faith, we must demonstrate this by sweet perfumes. What are sweet perfumes? It is that Jesus' name should not stink. The name of Jesus should not stink! Christian behaviour should be followed by good deeds. Even though we love our nation, we must ensure that it does not stink. Swazi behaviour should be characterized by good deeds; because we belong to God and believe in Him. Good behaviour will make God happy, and it will make us true believers. Such good deeds will make our nation a nation that knows God. (Easter Sunday, March 28, 1975: Archives of Swaziland Broadcasting and Information Services).

This discourse was unconventional in the sense that, unlike the Zionist sermons cited earlier in this chapter which emphasize the privilege and the divine sanction of Swazi kingship, this sermon places the monarchy on the same footing with other "brethren". As well, within the context of the political conflict between the monarchy and the commoners, this discourse was intended to subject all parties, including the monarchy to God's judgement.

The third form of resistance to the dominant ideology of the Easter ritual on the part of the clergy belonging to mission churches took place outside the Easter ritual context whereby influential mission church leaders gave tacit moral support to extra-parliamentary political actions which challenged the legitimacy of the Tinkhundla Government. This moral support for political

attitudes and social actions which challenged the ruling Swazi regime was articulated through public pastoral teachings designed to influence the behaviour of the urban, educated Swazi. In contrast to the dominant religious ethics of the Easter ritual which stressed hereditary rights, ascribed obligations, and allegiance to the monarchy, the social teachings of many influential mainline mission churches such as the Anglican Church, the Lutheran Church, and the Roman Catholic Church advocated social activism in the pursuit of social justice for all Swazi, especially the poor and the powerless (cf. Kasenene 1987:122).

A case in point is the role of the first Swazi Roman Catholic bishop, the late Bishop Mandlenkhosi Zwane (1932-80) who was ordained as a bishop in 1976 and died from a motor-car accident in 1980 (Catholic Institute for International Relations 1983:1). Bishop Zwane was a renowned Catholic theologian and social activist whose pastoral work was influenced by the Liberation Theology of Latin America and the Black Theologies of the United States and South Africa. He devoted his pastoral energies towards giving practical solutions to the problems faced by the poor and the oppressed, who included political refugees from South Africa and Mozambique, and the poor and "fearful" Swazi (Zwane 1983: 12-14, 72-74).

The many social services undertaken by Bishop Zwane also included the formation in 1976 of the Council of Swaziland Churches, an ecumenical

Christian organization which claims to be "continually searching for strategies to be used that would lead to social and economic justice" (Council of Swaziland Churches, Annual Report 1986-87:3). In the political sphere, the Bishop was supportive of underground and aboveground organizations and movements which sought to reinstate political democracy in the country (Kuper 1986:144; Africa Confidential, June 17, 1981).

Thus, in his many public speeches, Bishop Zwane was not only vociferous in his criticism of corruption and selfishness on the part of the Swazi ruling aristocrats, but also urged his fellow Catholics and all Swazi Christians to take concrete steps to eradicate certain "social injustices" in Swaziland (Zwane 1983: 73). For example, he criticized Swazi political elites for monopolizing the country's wealth and implored all educated Swazi Christians to stand up for justice. In a public address entitled "The Responsibility of the Educated Black Christian Swaziland", Bishop Zwane said:

Today in this country we are beginning to experience economic sins, where what are called the good things in life are enjoyed by a few who monopolize the resources that are supposed to belong to the whole community. The arguments that are used to justify this state of affairs are not convincing. There are no uncontrollable economic principles which inevitably bring about such a situation. There are councils of men who sit down, deliberate, and come to the conclusion that this is how things must be. In other words, human planning and human decision are responsible for such a state of affairs . . . The black educated Christian must know what is going on around him. Knowledge brings responsibility and this should lead

to action. We are all our brother's keeper (Zwane 1983:74).

It is important to note, however, that this advocacy of radical involvement on the part of educated Christian Swazi in the social transformation of the indigenous polity was not a new social teaching, but corresponds to earlier political conflicts in the 1960's between the monarchy and educated Swazi commoners belonging to mission churches. As I pointed out in Chapter Two, in the early 1960's many Swazi commoners expressed their opposition to monarchical domination through appeals to "Christian principles" and the United Nations Declaration on Universal Human Rights (cf. Sundkler 1976:227; Stevens 1963:234-238).

This link between mission churches and political activism is also endorsed by Stevens (1963) who points out that in the 1960's, even the leader of the socialist Ngwane National Liberatory Congress party (NNLC), Dr. Ambrose Zwane, dispelled suspicions about his alliance with Communist regimes by attributing his commitment to radical transformation of the Swazi political regime to his Christian convictions. Stevens cites Dr. Zwane as having said:

My experience has taught me that anybody who takes positive action for the liberation of his people is labelled "red" . . . These people forget that I am a Catholic. and if my politics clash with my religion, I would rather resign from politics (Stevens 1963:338).

Thus the connection between the mission churches and political opposition to the official ideology of the Swazi state has been a well established, albeit implicit, historical process which began in the 1960's. In fact, this historical process often resurfaces during critical periods in Swazi history which involve political power sharing between the monarchy and the commoners. I now turn to the next critical phase in post-colonial history commonly known as the "Liqogo Era" since it refers to the interregnum of 1982-86 following the death of King Sobhuza II when the country was ruled by the Liqogo or the Supreme Council of State. The Liqogo was a new institution which was established by Sobhuza II by decree in 1982 prior to his death (Kuper 1986a:162). Again, I show that during this volatile period of Swazi post-colonial history which Kuper describes as "the anarchic interregnum" (1986a:165), the role of the Easter ritual was more disruptive than integrative in that it reinforced the conflict between the monarchy and the commoners.

The Liqogo Era and the Role of the Royal Easter Ritual (1982-86)

The Liqogo or the Supreme Council of State took its name from the traditional liqogo or the royal family council of senior princes and princesses who advised the king (1986a:163). Like the traditional liqogo whose selection lay beyond the scope of the general public, this new body comprising fifteen senior councillors was presumed to have been appointed by the king before he

died, even though there was some controversy within the royal house regarding the actual process by which these councillors were selected (Matsebula 1987:300-301; Kuper 1986a: 163).

But unlike the indigenous liqoqo, whose membership was not fixed and whose operations were largely informal, this new institution comprised a more powerful, formally legalized body of supreme councillors which was established by the king's Decree of June 21, 1982. This new Liqoqo, always spelt with a capital "L", also comprised a fixed number of fifteen prominent Swazi which included princes, princesses, chiefs, and a few commoners, and its specific function was to "to advise the king [or Regent] on all matters of state" (Kuper 1986a:162-63).

However, soon after its formal appointment by the Queen Regent Dzeliwe Mdluli, the Liqoqo turned out to be a divided supreme council of state which reflected an internal power struggle within the royal family, on the one hand, and also a new royal tradition which was infamous for its arbitrary manipulation of "Swazi law and custom" and state power to suppress political dissent by commoners on the other hand (cf. Kuper 1986a:165-166). For example, in the first place, the Liqoqo regime was dominated by what came to be known as the "traditionalist faction" within the Swazi royal house which comprised persons "who believe[d] in absolute royal power and all the land and financial benefits that go with it" (Africa Confidential, November 16, 1983, p.4).

The "traditionalist faction" stood in direct opposition to the "modernist faction" led by the prime minister, Prince Mabandla, the Queen Regent Dzeliwe Mdluli, and other princes within the Liqogo itself who sought to re-invest the modern parliament and the civil service with more executive power than the Liqogo or the Supreme Council of State (Kuper 1986a:165). But since the traditionalist faction dominated the Liqogo, it was able to exploit the absolute powers invested in the Liqogo to silence the modernists through dismissals from public office and imprisonment without trial under the 60-Days Detention Act (Matsebula 1987: 300-303; Kuper 1986a:166).

Thus both the Queen Regent Dzeliwe Mdluli and the prime minister were dismissed by the Liqogo in 1983 following allegations that they attempted to "usurp the powers of the monarchy" by investing the modern government with more executive powers over the monarchy (Kuper 1986a:264; Matsebula 1987:302). Following his dismissal, the prime minister fled the country - for fear of possible imprisonment or trial for treason - to South Africa where he sought and was granted political asylum in the Bophuthatswana Homeland. The queen regent, on the other hand, was stripped of her ematinta or the symbolic crown of her office and was transferred from Lobamba royal capital to a junior royal village (Kuper 1986a:166-169).

But to many elders the demotion by the Liqogo of the queen regent from office was perceived as "untraditional", and other Swazi contested -

unsuccessfully - the dismissal of the queen regent at the High Court. The High Court ruled that the appointment of the queen regent is a matter that is governed by Swazi law and custom, and not by the Western court of law (Matsebula 1987:304-306). Nonetheless, the prevailing mood of many Swazi at the time was a general lack of confidence in the Liqogo regime. As Africa Confidential reported in 1985, discontent and criticism of the Liqogo was "growing among educated Swazi, and has spread to traditionalist peasants who were upset by the unprecedented act of the Bhekimpi [traditionalist] faction in 1983, in deposing Queen Dzeliwe, chosen by the late King Sobhuza II" (Africa Confidential, January 16, 1985, p.4).

The dismissal of Prime Minister Prince Mabandla, another appointee of the late King Sobhuza II, elicited social unrest since Prince Mabandla was known to be supportive of banned political leaders who were fighting to reinstate political democracy in Swaziland (Kuper 1986a:140). In fact, upon his appointment by the king in November 1979, Prince Mabandla released all former political detainees. He also became popular among the commoners for his concrete efforts to eliminate various forms of corruption allegedly perpetrated by the political elites in the civil service and state-controlled corporations (Africa Confidential, June 17, 1981, p.6; Kuper 1986a:140). As Kuper points out, the prime minister's investigations of corruption in high places

generated long-lasting tensions between the traditionalist faction of the Swazi political elite and the dismissed Prime Minister (1986a:141).

Over and above the dissension within the Swazi royal family, the repressive measures of the Liqogo regime included wide ranging coercive practices and directives such as the following: compulsory mourning rituals and taboos following the death of King Sobhuza II (Kuper 1986a:164), the use of the army to coerce people to participate in the Tinkhundla elections of 1983 (Kuper 1986a:171), detention-without-trial of civil servants who supported the deposed queen regent and the prime minister (Africa Confidential, November 16, 1983, p.4), the suppression of political activism by college and university students through intimidating actions such as the expulsion of student leaders and radical academics, and intermittent closures of the University of Swaziland (Africa Confidential, January 16, 1985, p.5).

However, like other royal invented traditions of the time, the Liqogo institution was resisted by many Swazi urban commoners in different ways. As noted above, many civil servants, political activists, and college and university students were openly critical of the regime. More importantly, during this period new extra-parliamentary political organizations were founded to contest what was perceived as the despotic rule of the Liqogo regime. As I pointed out in Chapter Four, the leading underground political movement of the time, namely the People's United Democratic Movement (PUDEMO) was formed during this

period. Its President, Mr. Kison Shongwe, had been detained without trial several times prior to the formation of the PUDEMO, and according to him, this underground political organization was "formed in 1983 by youths who were angry about the manner in which the country was being run" (The Times of Swaziland Sunday, 8 March 1992, p.15). In particular, the members of the PUDEMO were incensed with the failure of the monarchy to contain corruption, political nepotism, and widespread repression that characterized this period (The Times of Swaziland Sunday, 8 March 1992, p.15).

In addition to the PUDEMO, by the beginning of 1985 it was reported in Africa Confidential that Prince Dumisa, the charismatic political activist who commanded a large following among the Swazi working classes in the 1960's, had formed a new political party in Britain - where he is still living in enforced exile - and called it the Swazi Liberation Movement (SLM). The prince claimed that his following included leading, though anonymous, charismatic leaders within Swaziland who were patiently working towards replacing the "illegal" Swazi Government with the Western model of democracy (Africa Confidential, January 16, 1985).

To most Swazi, then, the Kingdom of Swaziland during the Liqoqo era was said to be engulfed by iifu lelimnyama or "a dark ominous cloud" in the sense that the Swazi had lost confidence in the tarnished integrity and legitimacy of the monarchy as the ultimate symbol and representative of the

Swazi nation (cf. Matsebula 1987:313). As Matsebula points out, "what shocked and embarrassed the Swazi nation to the core was the violation of their respected and venerated custom which has it that the Swazi head of state is the umlomo longacalimanga [the mouth that never tell lies]" (Matsebula 1987:313).

Given this social climate, it is interesting to note that the Easter ritual, like other Swazi invented traditions, was manipulated as an instrument for the mobilization of nation-wide support for the Liqoqo regime. While there are no available transcripts of the Easter ceremonies of the time, it became clear from interviews with many Swazi clergy and laity belonging to different churches that, during the Easter celebrations the Liqoqo rulers attempted to force Swazi Christians to participate in the royal Easter ritual. This was done, for example, through public announcements over the Government radio station, in which Swazi Christians were directed not to travel to South Africa for Christian services but enjoined to remain in the country to participate in the national Easter ceremony.

To most Swazi clergy belonging to mission churches, this attempt to coerce Christians to participate in the royal Easter ritual marked the turning point of their involvement with the Easter ritual. Since that time, many clergy and their followers belonging to mission churches have resisted royal directives by simply staying away from the Easter ceremony. In addition to defiance of the

royal order to participate in the Easter ceremony, other influential Swazi clergy resisted the hegemony of the Liqogo regime through critical social teachings made outside the context of the Easter ritual. For example, in an unprecedented moral action against the Liqogo rulers, the Anglican Bishop and the Apostolic Administrator of the Roman Catholic Church in Swaziland wrote a joint pastoral letter dated January 14, 1985 in which these leaders held the state accountable for the social unrest and social injustice that prevailed in Swaziland. Addressing itself to "all Christians of the Anglican and Catholic communities and to all men of goodwill in Swaziland", this social teaching was to be read in all Anglican Churches and Roman Catholic Churches for four consecutive Sundays. While the document makes no mention of the Liqogo, it nonetheless focuses on two main concerns about the Swazi state.

The first problem addressed in this pastoral letter was what the writers termed the "hidden violence" perpetrated by the state against its subjects under the guise that it is concerned with the maintenance of political stability, peace and Swazi tradition. Particular examples of "state violence" mentioned included nepotism, the 60-Day Detention Law, the suppression of freedom of speech, and the cruel treatment of South African refugees:

We are thinking of the violence which dictates how we [the churches] are to deal with refugees, the violence of unemployment, the violence of detention without trial. The peace that we speak of is not peace at any price. It is not simply law and order, for the violence of power can

effectively stifle revolt against injustice. Nor is peace to be equated with an unwholesome exaggerated nationalism, which can replace respect for the human dignity of the individual person (Bishop B. Mkhabela and Monsignor L.N. Ndlovu, January 24, 1985).

The second related concern expressed by the Anglican and Roman Catholic Church leaders was the acquiescence of the Christian community in the face of social injustice. Here the clerics strongly recommended that all Christians, including the privileged few, stand up against the "unjust" social order:

Peace cannot exist where there are unjust inequalities. . . Peace is not found, it is built, and the Christian man must resist personal and collective injustice with unselfish love and fearlessness (Bishop B. Mkhabela and Monsignor L.N. Ndlovu, January 24, 1985).

The general thrust of this social teaching, then, contradicts the dominant theme of the Easter ritual which identifies peace, stability, and the general wellbeing of the Swazi with unconditional obedience to and support for the monarchy. Furthermore, this pastoral letter is dialectically related to the dominant theme of the state ideology of cultural nationalism, which links the absolute rule of the Swazi monarchy with social harmony and prosperity. In fact, like many urban Swazi commoners at the time who openly opposed the dictatorial rule of the Liqogo, these church leaders also dismissed the autocratic rule of the Liqogo as fundamentally disruptive:

In spite of the explanations that have been given from time to time, the rapidity of changes made and the shifts of power in governing the country, without the participation or involvement of the majority of the nation, has given rise to feelings of perplexity, and uncertainty as to the future of what society holds for the future generation (Bishop B. Mkhabela and Monsignor L.N. Ndlovu).

To many Swazi, then, the Liqogo regime tarnished the traditional image of the monarchy as "the mouthpiece of the people" and the symbol of national cohesion. As Matsebula puts it: "Kingship to the Swazi means stability, tranquillity, unity, and prosperity" (1987:322). Thus, when the present king ascended to the throne in 1986, he attempted to contain the power struggles within the royal family and restore the respectability of the monarchy. For example, one of the major steps taken by King Mswati III to restore the integrity of the kingship was to dissolve the infamous Liqogo and revoke the 1982 decree which legalized it (cf. Beardsley, et al., 1991:xii).

The Reign of King Mswati III and the Intransigence of Tradition (1986-1992)

When the Crown Prince Makhosetive was enthroned as the King of Swaziland in 1986, he pledged to protect and preserve Swazi traditional institutions, follow in the footsteps of King Sobhuza II, and above all to serve the people as their "mouthpiece". Addressing the Swazi nation at Somhlolo National Stadium on his Coronation Day in April 25, 1986, King Mswati III

defined the monarchy as a sacred institution which embodies the world view, identity and the destiny of the Swazi:

A king is a king by his people. This is the theme of our social and political thought, a sacred part of our way of life and outlook. As we continue to cherish and employ this principle, we will go forward together in peace, seeking justice for all mankind (Supplement to The Times of Swaziland, April 16, 1992.p.23).

Significantly, the first coronation ceremony of King Mswati III took place at the sibaya or the national cattle byre at Ludzidzini royal capital, in the presence of the emabutfo or the national regiments. It was at this traditional ceremony that the Crown Prince was sworn-in as King Mswati III; and it was at the sibaya that he publicly accepted his position as King and Ngwenyama or the Lion of the Swazi nation, prior to the Western-style coronation ceremony at the National Stadium (cf. Matsebula 1987:325).

What translated to public policy, the king's emphasis on "tradition" meant that certain controversial 'traditions' such as the Tinkhundla form of government were to remain intact in spite of increasing objection from many urban Swazi commoners. As I noted in Chapter Three, the critical challenge facing the monarchy in the early 1990's has been the persistent demand by many urban Swazi for the return to multi-party democracy. But like his father, King Mswati III has been consistent in his view that the Swazi system of

government which prohibits divisive party politics and retains the absolute rule of the monarchy ensures stability, peace, and progress.

For example, in his Speech from the Throne in February 1992 at the opening of the 1992 session of the Parliament of Swaziland, King Mswati III justified the existing Swazi political system in terms of its social functions, such as the promotion of national unity, peace and stability. He contrasted the existing political system with the worldwide craving for democracy or "instant reformation", which he claimed causes "the catalogue of misery and suffering" in many new nations today (The Weekend Sun, 21 Feb. - 6 March 1992, p.2).

The king went on to urge the Swazi to support the Tinkhundla Review Commission which categorically precludes the reinstatement of 'divisive' party-politics in Swaziland. He maintained that the Swazi system of government deserves to be supported because it is more altruistic, democratic, and conducive to national cohesion than Western-style party politics:

We have learnt from the experience of others in the recent past. Any reform will be as a result of the wishes of the people, within a timetable that allows for proper debate and deliberation, and to the benefit of all. . . Our first directive is to nurture and sustain the atmosphere of social harmony and peace within the kingdom (The Weekend Sun, 21 Feb. - 6 March 1992, p.2).

This tendency to identify the monarchy with social harmony has been reiterated by the Easter ritual during King Mswati's period. As I showed in the previous chapter, the dominant rhetoric of the Easter ritual during the reign of

King Mswati II! has been to credit the Swazi monarchs with the promotion of integration in Swaziland. In fact, the relatively peaceful climate of Swaziland is ascribed to the blessings that followed the observance by King Somhlolo and his successors of the divine "command" that the Swazi should not fight the Europeans who came into country. For example, in 1991 one Zionist pastor at the Good Friday session of the Easter ritual said:

All nations desire to see the land of peace,
 To see the land that has a rich cultural heritage,
 To see the land that lives according to God's Decree!
 (Good Friday, March 29, 1991: Archives of Swaziland Broadcasting
 and Information Services).

Thus, the Easter rhetoric normally provides a "theodicy of good fortune" for the Swazi nation (cf. Weber 1946:271) in which the monarchy is ostensibly sanctioned by God to lead the country to peace and prosperity, while opposition to the monarchy spells doom for the nation. For example, the same Zionist pastor cited above who described Swaziland as a peaceful country cautioned the Swazi against opposing royal injunctions:

Whosoever opposes them,
 Will be opposing what was decreed by God.
 God gave the kings the right to use force.
 The kings use force to guide, preserve, and sustain the nation.
 We survive as a nation because of royal protection.
 (Good Friday, March 29, 1991: Archives of Swaziland Broadcasting
 and Information Services).

While this attempt to 'baptize' the Swazi royalty as Christian was not opposed directly, it was nonetheless covertly resisted by many "mission

Christians" through general non-participation in the Easter ceremony. As I noted in the previous chapter, the new king spoke out strongly against the habitual absence of many "Mission Christians" from the Easter ceremony. King Mswati III stressed that the Easter ritual was a national and interdenominational ceremony which ought to be recognized by the entire Christian community in Swaziland, and not just by the Zionist churches. Indeed, the king pointed out that he expected to see the different Christian churches making positive use of the Easter ceremony to iron out ill-feelings and tensions within the Christian community.

But the non-participation of many Mission Christians at the Easter ritual is motivated by much deeper social tensions between the monarchy and most mission churches. To many Swazi clergy, as I noted in my discussion of the Liqoqo regime, the monarchy has been perceived as a stumbling block to social progress. To cite an example, at a theology workshop for senior representatives of National Christian Councils and church leaders from Southern and Eastern Africa held in Zimbabwe in September 1989, a Swazi clergyman belonging to the Anglican Church listed a number of problems allegedly faced by churches in Swaziland. The first problem he mentioned was that the Swazi aristocrats, namely the king and the chiefs, promote the problematic practice of polygyny. This advocacy of polygyny by the aristocrats, he claimed, was openly advocated by many Zionist church leaders who support

the status quo. But those church leaders who criticized this practice were ostracized in one way or another. He gave the example of an expatriate pastor belonging to the American-based Rhema Bible Church who was deported from the country for openly criticizing the monarchy for perpetrating the 'dysfunctional' practice of polygyny (Documentation 1989, Kairos in Africa:67).

The second problem noted by this Swazi clergyman was the repressive rule of the Swazi monarchy in which political dissent was suppressed through intimidation:

It is said that theology is in the people themselves. But what can be done if people live in fear all the time. They [the rulers] will always say this is a peaceful country. Yet the people are always told: "on whose land do you think you will stay? If you disobey you will go". The fear that comes from such a statement makes people become passive and totally submissive (Documentation 1989, Kairos in Africa:68).

The third sweeping charge that this cleric made against Swazi aristocrats was that most of the chiefs were not only resolutely non-Christian but also that they deliberately violated the people's right to religious freedom by holding mandatory Sunday meetings which clashed with conventional Sunday morning services. This accusation, by the way, contradicted the dominant rhetoric of the royal Easter ritual that the Swazi aristocracy has been the custodian of the Christian religion (Documentation 1989, Kairos in Africa:68).

This criticism of the monarchy by a Swazi church leader is - in the context of Swaziland - a radical repudiation of the dominant theme of the Easter ritual which associates the absolute rule of the monarchy with a harmonious lifestyle characterized by consensus politics. In fact, this case is a demonstration of one of the indirect ways by which mission churches resist, question, and challenge the dominant ideology of the Swazi state. For Scott, this social behaviour by a subordinate social group constitutes the "hidden transcript" or the 'clandestine' discourses and actions which "represent a critique of power spoken from behind the back of the dominant" (1990:xii, 14-15). Thus many Swazi belonging to mission churches challenge the dominant ideology of the Easter ritual in many oblique ways, including "offstage" public discourses like the conference paper cited above.

Indeed, as I have shown above, examples of similar "hidden transcripts" by emanating from mission Christians include the cases of the critical public social teachings given by Swazi clergy in 1980, 1985, and 1989 that depict the Swazi monarchy as an institution that promotes, rather than represses, social dissension in Swazi society. In contrast to the dominant theme of the Easter ritual which credits the monarchy with the establishment of the peaceful, stable, and prosperous kingdom, the social teachings cited above actually preach the opposite message that the existing 'traditional' political

system constitutes a threat to social progress and national solidarity in modern Swaziland.

More important, however, is the fact that these acts of resistance by mission Christians represent what may be called the general hidden transcript of many urban commoners, namely the rejection of particular Swazi 'traditions' which are perceived to be partisan and opposed to the interests of Swazi urban commoners. Like many Swazi clergy affiliated to mission churches, other Swazi urban commoners express their hidden transcripts through sheltered forms of discourse such as seminars and regular meetings for various groups such as the People's United Democratic Movement (PUDEMO), the Human Rights Association of Swaziland (HUMARAS), and business leaders and administrators in the modern bureaucratic sector. I now give a few examples of non-religious discourses which reflect the widespread antipathy among many urban commoners towards specific Swazi invented traditions. This will demonstrate that the opposition by many mission Christians to the dominant ideology of the Easter ritual is consistent with other forms of resistance to the official ideology or the "public transcript" (Scott 1990) of the Swazi state.

The first example relates to the general indictment of the existing Swazi 'traditional' government as an obstacle to national stability and social progress because it engenders and promotes social evils like political nepotism, inefficiency in the public sector, and lethargy among Swazi youth. In short, for

many urban commoners the monarchy has become a scapegoat for many of the shortcomings of post-colonial Swazi society. This view was shared by many educated Swazi at a special seminar for expatriate and Swazi managers held at the Swazi Royal Sun hotel, at Ezulwini in February 1991. The seminar was entitled "Swazi Culture, Custom, & The Workplace", and its purpose was to accustom the foreign investor with Swazi norms and values which affect the productivity of the Swazi worker. In addition, the seminar also served as a social occasion through which Swazi managers - who included senior parliamentarians, civil servants, and professional administrators - expressed their criticisms of selected Swazi traditions, especially the disruptive aspects of monarchical absolute rule.

A case in point is the contradiction arising from the role of the king as the executive officer in charge of the civil service and parastatal corporations. In a paper entitled "Barriers to Effective Performance by Swazi Managers", Dr. J. Maseko, a Swazi commoner and manager in the private sector, lamented the fact that the direct control by the monarchy of the public sector gave rise to political nepotism which in turn inhibited industry and efficiency in the working environment. In part, Dr. Maseko said:

To our ordinary manager with no prominent family ties, the incentive to perform competently is squashed right from the beginning. He may conceive the status quo as one in which you only have to know the right people in the right places. Even when he finally gets appointed to a senior

position by some stroke of luck, and realizing that he actually landed in that position through political manoeuvring, he may not perform to the expectations of all concerned. If competence is no big deal, why strive for it anyway? - He may ask himself (Swazi Culture, Custom & The Workplace, 14 February 1991).

This perspective that monarchical rule hinders progress in Swaziland was shared by most of the Swazi speakers at the above-mentioned seminar. Other instances of indirect protest about the Swazi traditional leaders ranged from subtle critique of the "personalized authority" of kingship to the economic liability of tribute labour for the Swazi royalty. With regard to the personal rule of the monarchy, the deputy president of the Senate, Mr. A. Khoza, suggested that the centralization of political power in the office of the king gave rise to needless interference by the monarchy in the conventional means of resolving industrial disputes. In his paper entitled "Traditional Beliefs and Custom in the Workplace", Mr. Khoza said:

The headman and the chief are seen as "authority" representing the king who is seen as the chief administrator, chief judge, and chief priest. To a large extent, this explains why certain disputes in the workplace find their way to the Great Place (Ludzidzini royal capital) contrary to set procedures (Swazi Culture, Custom & The Workplace, 14 February 1991).

Furthermore, the deputy leader of the House of Assembly, Mr. O. Z. Dlamini, suggested that compulsory tribute labour for the royalty - which includes the weeding of the royal fields and the Incwala ceremony - should be

reviewed in the light of the new needs and the constraints of contemporary life in Swaziland. He contended that these traditional practices constituted an economic liability for the investor, the Swazi worker and the nation at large :

Under normal circumstances, members of the community are summoned to do royal duties by . . . a messenger from the king or chief. . . It is a fact the time spent on traditional work, if calculated, would show that a formidable amount of money is spent on what we call traditional work at the expense of the workplace and the taxpayer himself. These matters call for sober discussion openly by business, traditional authorities, and the working population. It touches on the economy of the country (Swazi Culture, Custom & the Workplace, 14 February 1991).

The social and cultural significance of these three cases of 'private' discourses can hardly be emphasized. These comments were made by Swazi educated commoners holding influential positions in society, Far from glorifying the existing political system, these Swazi managers collectively depict the present regime as unscrupulous, overbearing, and as an impediment to development in Swaziland.

Taken together these discourses emphasize the social division between the aristocrats and the commoners, and these criticisms of 'tradition' are hardly conducive to the spirit of cultural nationalism which is expressed in part through kuhlehla or the participation in royal ceremonies like the Incwala and the Easter ritual.

The second illustration of the use of exclusive meetings for the expression of the disenchantment of urban Swazi commoners with absolute monarchical rule concerns the meetings of the Human Rights Association of Swaziland (HUMARAS). As I pointed out in Chapter Three, HUMARAS defines itself as a non-partisan organization which aims at the protection of basic human rights for all Swazi regardless of race, ethnic origin, status, sex or religion. Although this organization refers to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights outlined by the United Nations in 1948, it also provides a forum through which, among other things, the supposedly 'democratic', Swazi aristocracy is challenged on its own terms, that is, according to the principle that "the king is a king by the people".

A case in point was the annual general meeting of HUMURAS held in January 25, 1992 at the prestigious Convention Centre of the Swazi Royal Sun hotel. At this meeting many academic papers were read by different types of "shadow" Swazi leaders whose common bond was the shared hidden transcript maintaining that the traditional government was a continuing problem in Swazi society. These leaders included members of parliament, leaders of HUMARAS, PUDEMO, SWAYOCO, and "trusted" academics. The general view expressed here was that the traditional government was illegal, undemocratic, and led by "a certain clique" which is unknown to the people (The Times of Swaziland Sunday, 26 Jan. 1992, p.2).

For example, one of the speakers at this HUMARAS meeting was Mr. M. Dlamini, a former deputy attorney-general in the civil service, who argued that the present regime was not only administered by many illicit groups such as a controversial body called the "Central Committee", but also that these clandestine leaders have usurped the powers of the traditional chiefs and the libandla of the Swazi National Council (The Weekend Sun, 7-21 Feb. 1992, p.3). Mr. Dlamini further contended that the present regime has violated Swazi customary law in that indigenous customary law provided that all major national issues ought to be debated and resolved by the libandla, an inclusive, open nationwide body in which all Swazi males were members by virtue of birth. The traditional libandla, therefore, "was a public forum where issues were debated and resolved" by public acclamation (The Weekend Sun, 7-21 Feb. 1992, p.3; cf. Kuper 1986a:138). This system of government, according to the speaker, provided sufficient checks and balances against the possible abuse of power by the king and other members of the royalty. But the present 'traditional' government, he contended, has now replaced the libandla with "various councils in and around Ludzidzini [royal capital]" which are "incapable of criticising themselves" (The Weekend Sun, 7-21 Feb. 1992, p.3).

Thus the so-called 'traditional' government in which the king rules in concert with the Swazi National Council is criticized by other Swazi in accordance with what they regard as the conventional meaning of Swazi

kingship. Notwithstanding the possibility that the above critique and reinterpretation of Swazi kingship may be coloured by political motives, what is significant is that this perspective represents a particular interpretation of Swazi kingship which is shared by many urban Swazi who advocate political democracy.

In fact, the charge that the present regime is administered by unscrupulous Swazi serving in new, 'untraditional' councils was expressed by another Swazi legal scholar outside the framework of the HUMARAS seminar. Stating his opinion through the medium of The Swazi Observer of February 19, 1992, Mr. A.M. Dlamini, who teaches law at the University of Bophuthatswana, South Africa, charged the 'traditional' elites or the close advisors of the Swazi monarchy with undermining the integrity of the chiefs and the king. Mr Dlamini charged that the political elites tarnished the integrity of the Swazi aristocracy by inventing a new operational structure of Swazi kingship in which the hitherto sacred and impartial king was converted into an executive, partisan ruler who competed with Swazi commoners who were falsely depicted as 'enemies' of the monarchy (The Swazi Observer, 19 Feb. 1992, p.8).

Mr. Dlamini further claimed that the revocation of the 1968 Westminster Constitution which provided for a constitutional monarchy in Swaziland was not motivated by conservatism as such, but by greed and opportunism on the part of the traditionalists. Mr. Dlamini argued that in fact,

the indigenous conceptions and modus operandi of Swazi kingship were more closely related to the spirit of constitutional monarchy as outlined in the repealed Westminster Constitution than the Swazi elites claimed. He argued that Swazi customary law provided that the king should remain aloof from factional conflicts, and govern the country in close consultation with the queen mother and the libandla (The Saturday Observer, 19 Feb. 1992, p.8).

In contrast to these indigenous ideals, the new Tinkhundla Government, according to Mr. Dlamini, not only subverts the indigenous polity, but also opens the door to easy manipulation of the monarchy by unscrupulous political elites:

Whereas the Tinkhundla System was meant to strengthen the indigenous nature of our government, the indigenous structure of chiefs and the Swazi National Council have been weakened to the point of non-existence. The marginalization of these important institutions in the government of Swaziland has resulted in the exposure of our Monarchy to all sorts of machinations and manipulations from the opportunists. If the Swazi National Council (and its Standing Committee) and the chiefs were occupying and performing their rightful roles, institutions like Liqoqo or the Central world be redundant (The Swazi Observer, 19 Feb. 1992, p.8).

Significantly, the above criticisms of the existing political system on the basis of 'conventional' interpretations of customary law were made by Swazi whose family backgrounds are linked to the ruling Dlamini aristocracy. For instance, the parents of these critics of the existing regime are not only

princes and traditional chiefs in designated areas in the country, but they also served as the key leaders of the controversial Liqogo regime (1982-86). One prince served as the Authorized Person or the chairperson of the Supreme Council of State from 1982 to 1986, while the other prince was appointed prime minister from 1983 to 1987 (cf. Beardsley, et. al. 1991:x-xiv).

Despite these royal ties, however, the condemnations of the present 'traditional' government by the above Swazi should be seen as representative of the sentiments of many urban commoners who feel discriminated against on the basis of birth and or political loyalties. As Mr. A. Dlamini himself put it:

It is a sad indictment that Swaziland has, up to now, barely made use of her educated people at the legislative, executive, and judicial levels of government in the state. Whilst on the disqualification of certain sections of the population, it needs to be realized that the apparent preference for a Dlamini [the ruling clan] is without national or customary foundation (The Swazi Observer, 19 Feb. 1992, p.9).

A similar sentiment of antipathy towards the nepotism of the 'traditional' government was forcefully expressed by Mr. Jabulane Matsebula, a self-exiled member of PUDEMO, who stated in his Open Letter to the prime minister of Swaziland that:

It is high time that the royal family government realize that Swaziland does not belong to the Dlamini ruling clique, but to all Swazi, both black and white. The king must also avoid regarding himself as a supreme person who is above the law. We need to have a democratic institution which will be regarded as the supreme and highest

document of the state (The Weekend Observer, 1 Feb. 1992, p.13).

However, beyond these intellectual and polemical contestations of the Swazi 'traditionalist' government by various groups of urban commoners, the 1990's have also seen the emergence of open and defiant social actions designed to pressure the Swazi rulers to revert to the 1968 Independence Constitution which provided for multi-party politics and a constitutional monarchy. In short, the hidden transcript of many urban commoners has now re-surfaced in the form of new radical political organizations and associations which include PUDEMO, SWAYOCO, and HUMARAS.

Defiant Social Actions Against the Tinkhundla Government

In Chapter Three I demonstrated that the social climate of my field research on the Incwala and the Easter rituals of 1991-92 was characterized by the emergence of overt, organized resistance to the present Swazi political regime which claims to derive its legitimacy from Swazi tradition. I argued that the non-participation of many urban commoners in the Incwala ritual should be seen as a form of resistance against the existing Swazi rulers. In Chapter Four, I extended this argument to the Easter ritual, showing that the Easter ceremony was another royal ritual whose 'traditionalist' agenda has been consistently rejected by many Swazi affiliated to mission churches.

In the present chapter I have shown that the dominant theme of the Easter ritual in post-colonial Swaziland has fostered obedience and loyalty to the absolute monarchy. This ethical teaching, I indicated, was consistent with that of several Swazi invented traditions which have also been resisted over the years by various groups of urban commoners including church leaders, college and university students, political activists, academics, and the 'non-traditional' Swazi elite. However, with the notable exception of PUDEMO which was formed in 1983, most of these groups have expressed their political dissent intermittently, and their condemnations of the political regime have been largely circuitous. Thus, the previous examples of different social groups with discourses that which challenge the state constitute what Scott (1990) would term "the hidden transcript" of the Swazi commoners.

In this section, on the other hand, I give three illustrations of what Scott would call "the public declaration of the hidden transcript" (1990:202), a social context in which the hitherto covert political opposition by urban commoners to monarchical domination is publicly affirmed by specific political groups and associations. More importantly, the political ambitions of the commoners are declared publicly, and through defiant social actions. I show that the symbolic magnitude of these open political actions is underscored by the fact that the new political groups did not simply denounce the Swazi political system through socially standardized channels such as annual meetings,

seminars, or the press. In addition, the opposition to the existing regime was expressed through illegal collective actions such as the holding of political meetings, conducting of political campaigns, and publicized collective resolutions which contradict the royal decrees.

As I pointed out in Chapter Three, such open acts of defiance by the commoners represented an unprecedented, volatile relationship between the Swazi rulers and many urban commoners. Indeed for Scott, such a conflictual situation would amount to "a symbolic declaration of war" (1990:203). As Scott puts it:

Any public refusal, in the teeth of power, to produce the words, gestures, and other signs of normative compliance is typically construed - and typically intended - as an act of defiance. Here the distinction is between a practical failure to comply and a declared refusal to comply . . . When practical failure to comply is joined with a pointed, public refusal it constitutes a throwing down of the gauntlet, a symbolic declaration of war (Scott 1990:203).

Significantly, the leaders of the political groups which openly defy the laws banning political activity are the urban commoners, and most of them are former political prisoners who had been detained under the 60-Days Detention Act. As a result, in some cases their occasional insolence and intense animosity towards the Swazi "elders" has drawn some damaging criticisms from many Swazi who believe in respect for authority. In fact, much of the criticism made against some of these leading political groups has focused on their methods of

political mobilization rather than on their objectives, which were to eradicate the Tinkhundla 'traditional' government.

Defiant Acts of the Swaziland Youth Congress (SWAYOCO)

The first example of the defiant public declaration of the hidden political agenda of many urban commoners are the social activities of the Swaziland Youth Congress (SWAYOCO). The SWAYOCO, as I noted in Chapter Three, is a militant youth organization formed in 1991 by university and college students whose general aim, according to its president, Mr. B. Tsabedze, was to "protect the interests of the youth in this country in all aspects of life including economic, political and cultural spheres" (The Swazi Observer, 13 Jan. 1992, p.1).

The main social activity of SWAYOCO was the weekly political campaign called the "clean-up campaign" in which the leaders and their followers selected specific urban townships, especially urban slums, where they mobilized the youth into picking up refuse off their streets. As the youth picked up the litter they were encouraged to join in the singing of political songs which called for the downfall of the present government.

In fact, the distinctive features of the weekly clean-up campaigns were political slogans, dances, and songs which were designed to spurn the Swazi Government, its leaders, its traditional dances, and even the national

anthem. For example, the leaders of the SWAYOCO carried banners which read: "Away with Imbokodvo [the king's political party]"; while some of the famous chants and slogans included the following: "Away with the corrupt regime! Viva PUDEMO!"

But the most distinctive activity of the SWAYOCO was its toyi-toyi dance, a "liberation dance" associated with the Umkhonto Wesizwe or the military wing of the African National Congress of South Africa. This militant stance was supplemented with the conclusion of every weekly campaign by the singing of the foreign national anthem entitled Nkosi Sikelela i'Africa (God Protect Africa), which has been the standard liberation anthem for many militant blacks fighting colonial rule in Southern Africa since the 1960's. Above all, the leaders of the SWAYOCO frequently appeared in military uniform and they were addressed as "Comrades", an endearing term for left-wing socialists (cf. The Times of Swaziland, 22 Nov. 1991, p.35).

In addition to the illegal clean-up campaigns, this youth organization conducted occasional public meetings on selected issues, organized fundraising campaigns and public demonstrations. These activities would invariably lead to the arrest, indictment, and trial of the leaders. When brought to trial the leaders of the SWAYOCO turned the court into another political rally in which the SWAYOCO members performed their liberation dance, chanted political slogans, and sang freedom songs (cf. The Swazi Observer, 19 Feb. 1992, p.6).

As a result of the apparent futility of these trials, many charges laid against SWAYOCO leaders for offenses such as disturbing the public peace or the holding of political meetings have been dropped. Indeed, in due course, many of the ordinary political meetings of the SWAYOCO have been overlooked by the police.

Thus, while all the leaders of the SWAYOCO are bona fide Swazi, their method of political mobilization has been intentionally and radically opposed to conventional norms associated with the existing political regime. The foreign toyi-toyi dance or the liberation dance, for example, was rationalized on the grounds that the youth were exercising their freedom of choice between the indigenous qiya dance, the heroic dance related to the national regiments on the one hand, and the toyi-toyi liberation dance on the other hand (The Times of Swaziland Sunday, 29 Dec. 1991, p. 15). Yet the symbolic significance of these social activities is patent: namely, the disenchantment with the dominant socio-cultural values. As the president of SWAYOCO puts it:

Not only is the environment filthy, but this filth is extended to the minds of those in authority. . . The Tinkhundla system is bankrupt, pregnant with nepotism, unaccountability, and a lack of popular representation (The Times of Swaziland Sunday, 29 Dec. 1991, p.15).

As a result of this loss of confidence in Swazi rulers, the SWAYOCO leaders have been quick to condemn everyone who appeared to collaborate

with the present regime. The 'collaborators', for SWAYOCO, included many public figures ranging from chiefs in the rural sectors who would not permit SWAYOCO leaders to conduct their clean-up campaigns in certain communities, to the administration of the University of Swaziland which would not encourage SWAYOCO to use university facilities for its political campaigns.

Defiant Acts of the Peoples' United Democratic Movement (PUDEMO)

The second illustration of the public declaration of the covert political ambitions of the Swazi commoners was the bold decision taken by PUDEMO and other new political parties to unban themselves, state their political goals, announce their leaders, call for the dissolution of the Tinkhundla Government and for a return to the political democracy and constitutional monarchy which prevailed prior to the Decree of April 1973. In addition to PUDEMO which unbanned itself in February 1992, two new political parties which also went public included the Swazi United Front, whose president, Pastor Matsapha Shongwe, claimed that his party had been operating underground since 1973 (The Times of Swaziland, 28 Feb. 1992, p.28). The third political party was called the Swaziland National Party, which announced Mr. Elmond M. Shongwe, a businessman as its president, and Mrs. Glenrose Dlamini, a trade unionist, as its secretary general. Significantly, this new party, like PUDEMO,

publicized its existence by calling a press conference in Mbabane, the capital city of Swaziland (The Times of Swaziland, 19 March 1992, p.1).

The timing of the public declaration of these illegal political parties was designed as a political rebuff to the King's Decree of 1992 known as the Tinkhundla Review Commission Decree in which the king rejected the calls for multi-party democracy in favour of making further attempts to reform the Tinkhundla Government. In addition, 1992 was supposed to be the election year in which the Swazi rulers were supposed to announce the fourth general election under the controversial Tinkhundla Government. Therefore the formation of these political parties was also intended to signify the rejection of the non-party elections which are provided for by the Tinkhundla political system, and also to demonstrate the determination of many Swazi political activists to practice multi-party politics.

The common theme that bound together all three parties was their unanimous rejection of the Tinkhundla Government and the King's Decree of 1992 which further legalized this system as a permanent form of government for Swaziland. But it was the People's United Democratic Movement (PUDEMO), which was most organized and vociferous in its defiance of the existing government.

The PUDEMO, for example, functioned like a full-fledged opposition party with a shadow government which, according to PUDEMO leaders, was

democratically elected by its members at a meeting in a foreign country, presumably South Africa. The president of PUDEMO is Mr. Kison Shongwe, a self employed legal consultant and a former civil servant who had been detained several times since the 1973 Decree. His secretary general is Mr. Dominic Mngomezulu, a practising lawyer who had also been imprisoned several times since 1990 for defying the laws prohibiting party-politics in Swaziland. As an organized party operating above-ground, PUDEMO had official letterhead, corresponded with political leaders like Mr. de Klerk, the South African prime minister, on an official basis, claimed to speak on behalf of "the people", and even created a controversy by claiming to have a defence department outside the country (The Times of Swaziland, 30 March 30 1992, p.3).

One of the important social acts of defiance conducted by PUDEMO, however, included publicized political campaigns among Swazi workers in industrial towns such as the Ubombo Ranches sugar mill and the Simunye Sugar Estate, both of which are among the country's biggest employers. To cite a specific example, at a campaign rally held in March 1992 at the Ubombo Ranches sugar company, the secretary general of PUDEMO, Mr. Mngomezulu, accused the Swazi rulers of suppressing and terrorizing their own people through the 1973 Decree, the Tinkhundla Government, and police brutality directed at SWAYOCO and PUDEMO members. He assured the people,

however, that the end of the "repressive regime" was imminent: "This year will be the most different in the history of Swaziland. It is the year in which we will bury Tinkhundla" (The Times of Swaziland, 8 March 1992, p.2).

Like the SWAYOCO public campaigns described above, this PUDEMO rally embodied several symbols of resistance against 'repressive' regimes. These symbols include the African liberation anthem, Nkosi Sikelela i'Africa, accompanied by the Black Power salute or the raised clenched fists.

Perhaps the most significant symbolic social action conducted by PUDEMO in conjunction with SWAYOCO was the invention of a political ritual called the "Day of Mourning" scheduled for April 12, 1992 to mourn the enactment of the Decree of April 12, 1973. This event took place in Mbabane, the capital city of Swaziland. As the secretary of PUDEMO explained to the press, the main thrust of the function was to "to protest the decision taken by the Imbokodvo [the king's party] to ban political activity in Swaziland" (The Times of Swaziland, 8 March 1992, p.2).

To signify their open protest and defiance of the Decree of 1973, the organizers of this political rally - who included the president and deputy president of SWAYOCO - decided to hold an illegal meeting at Coronation Park, in Mbabane, the capital city, on the evening of April 11, 1992. This was supposed to be a 'preparatory' meeting, and the main item on the agenda was to draw up a petition to be presented to the prime minister the following day.

Significantly, this meeting was also attended by the leaders of the Swazi National Front (the new political party) and some members of the Human Rights Association of Swaziland. The number of persons present at this meeting totalled no more than fifty.

The most conspicuous participants at this illegal assembly were the militant members of the Swaziland Youth Congress (SWAYOCO), who chanted political slogans, danced the toyi-toyi, and paraded the SWAYOCO flag whose colours - green, gold, and black - resemble those of the African National Congress (ANC) of South Africa. However, the meeting soon attracted a large crowd of spectators and quiet supporters when the police moved in, ordered the participants to disperse, and reminded them of the illegality of the meeting. But when the leaders of PUDEMO and SWAYOCO defied the police order and proceeded with the meeting, the para-military police invaded the park and arrested the PUDEMO and SWAYOCO leaders as well as a few participants. Some participants voluntarily entered the police vans, while others marched to the police station, about two kilometres away (cf. The Times of Swaziland, 13 April 1992, p.24; The Swazi Observer, 13 April 1992 p.1).

At the police station, the followers of SWAYOCO and PUDEMO started an impromptu demonstration in which they demanded the release of their leader, danced the toyi-toyi and sang liberation songs. Occasionally, the police had to use physical force to contain the demonstrators, and this action

elicited a violent response from some of the youths. However, in the final analysis, law and order prevailed, and the key leaders of the political meeting, namely, the secretary general of PUDEMO, and the president and deputy president of SWAYOCO were detained until the following day (The Times of Swaziland, 13 April 1992, p.1; The Swazi Observer, 13 April 1992, pp.1-3).

Thus on the scheduled date of the "Day of Mourning", April 12, 1992, the PUDEMO and SWAYOCO members were without leaders. But many youths proceeded with the plans for the new political ritual. The activities of this ritual began with a public procession - consisting of about a hundred participants - along Allister Miller Street, the main street of the capital city, and ended at the prime minister's residence. The participants in this procession were mainly members of SWAYOCO, who carried the SWAYOCO flag, sang revolutionary songs, and performing their liberation dance, the toyi-toyi.

Although the demonstrators could not meet with the prime minister or his representative as they had hoped, some of the youths began to address the growing crowd of bystanders who had followed the procession up to the prime minister's residence. The youths made it clear that they did not recognize the existing Swazi Government as legitimate, and that they perceived their demonstration against the government as marking the beginning of a revolution in Swaziland. As The Times of Swaziland of April 13, reported:

The youths said they were prepared to die yesterday as it was the start of a revolution in the country. The youth spoke very critically of the king, the present Government, and the police (The Times of Swaziland, April 13, 1992 p.24).

The symbolic importance of the "Day of Mourning", then, lies in the fact that it represented what Kertzer (1988) would call a rite of rebellion, that is, a political ritual through which subordinate social groups signify a radical break with the dominant group by, among other things, redefining and delegitimizing existing power relations (Kertzer 1988:169). For Kertzer, such rites of resistance to oppression, no matter how insignificant they may seem, can create a sense of solidarity as well as an alternative political vision. As Kertzer puts it, rites of rebellion "help create an alternative conception of a future political universe, and they instil strong emotions of resistance to the government" (1988:172).

Defiant Acts of the Human Rights Association of Swaziland (HUMARAS)

The third illustration of overt social actions carried out by urban Swazi commoners to defy the public transcript of the ruling aristocrats is represented by the collective actions of HUMARAS. Since its formation in 1991, HUMARAS, as I pointed out in Chapter Three, has served as an umbrella body which has provided a convenient platform for various urban organizations such as political parties, trade unions, and associations which are categorically

opposed to absolute monarchical rule in the country. For example, at the annual general meeting of HUMARAS on January 25, 1993, at the Royal Swazi Sun hotel, HUMARAS brought together various sections of the urban Swazi leadership, including trade unionists, selected Members of Parliament, academics, and the leaders of SWAYOCO and PUDEMO. The political agenda of this well publicized meeting became apparent as all the selected speakers were unanimous in their condemnation of the 'traditionalist' government. Particularly striking was the comment made by the Deputy Speaker of the House of Assembly of the Swazi Parliament who bemoaned the fact that the country was run without a constitution, and that the existing 'laws' governing the country were controlled by "a certain clique" of traditionalists (The Times of Swaziland, 26 Jan. 1992, p.2).

Thus as a nationwide human rights body, HUMARAS derived its moral and political integrity from its claim to be a non-partisan group and to serve as society's watchdog. In this regard, HUMARAS has served as a forum for the expression of joint criticism of the Swazi state by urban commoners representing a wide circle of urban workers in both the public and the private sectors. A case in point was the events following the pronouncement of the Tinkhundla Review Commission Decree of 1992 which effectively sanctioned the Tinkhundla Government as a permanent political tradition for Swaziland. While the new political parties such as the Swazi National Front and PUDEMO

condemned the Decree as another instance of oppression, it was the collective defiant action of the Human Rights Association of Swaziland (HUMARAS) which was more effective as a major weapon of resistance against the King's Decree. To understand the seriousness of the resistance to the royal Decree of 1992, it is essential to note the manner in which this new law was enacted.

The King's Decree of 1992, like other royal directives since the Decree of 1973, was presented to the Swazi nation as the general will of the Swazi people. When the king announced the formation of a Tinkhundla Review Commission at a public forum at the sibaya or the national cattle byre in February 26, 1992, he stressed that his decision was representative of the opinion held by most Swazi: that the Tinkhundla Government needs to be reformed - and not to be replaced by multi-party politics. According to the king, the resolution to reform the Tinkhundla Government was a follow-up to the first royal commission dubbed "Vusela I" or the First Royal Visitation, which was headed by Prince Masitsela in which the senior prince visited various Tinkhundla or congregational centres in the country soliciting the people's opinions about the merits or weaknesses of the Tinkhundla Government. It was at these meetings that most Swazi, according to Prince Masitsela, expressed their desire to continue with the Tinkhundla Government.

The royal report, however, was contradicted by newspaper reports and eyewitness accounts which suggest that during this First Royal Visitation,

most Swazi, especially those living in urban centres, rejected the Tinkhundla government as unworkable (cf. The Times of Swaziland Sunday, 24 Nov. 1991, p.1). In Manzini, the country's largest and most populous city, the royal commission could not even hold its scheduled meeting owing to obstructions by Swazi Youth belonging to SWAYOCO (The Times of Swaziland Sunday, 1 March 1992, p.17).

In addition, most of the actual proceedings of the First Royal Visitation were shrouded in secrecy as the media were barred from covering some of the meetings. Although the ban on media coverage of these meetings was finally lifted, most of the video recordings in which many Swazi openly rejected the Tinkhundla Government have since been censored by the state. Those Swazi civil servants who openly criticized the existing political system expressed their concerns about possible victimization by the Swazi rulers (cf. The Times of Swaziland Sunday, 24 November 1992, p.1). Nonetheless, according to the official report by Prince Masitsela, the Chairperson of the First Royal Visitation, "the majority of the Swazi people want the Tinkhundla Government" (Prince Masitsela at the sibaya or the National Cattle Byre, February 26, 1992).

The purpose of the second royal commission dubbed "Vusela II" or the Second Royal Visitation, therefore, was to receive private, individual recommendations from any interested Swazi concerning the ways and means

by which the Tinkhundla Government could be improved. The position of HUMARAS on this issue was that the royal decree should be rejected and resisted through non-participation. The first collective action taken by HUMARAS regarding the process of reviewing the Tinkhundla Government was reported by The Times of Swaziland on March 9, 1992 in which the national executive committee of HUMARAS, which claimed to represent Swazi residing in the main urban cities and industrial towns such as Mbabane, Manzini, Big Bend Sugar Mill, and Usuthu Pulp company, dismissed the royal commission as "a non-starter and a waste of time, money and human resources" (The Times of Swaziland, 9 March 1992, p.1).

When asked why they rejected the king's command, the executive of HUMARAS was cited as having said: "[because] it is not known what criteria were used in choosing the members [of the royal commission]. We as Humaras stand for pluralism and democracy, two aspects of which Vusela II or the Imbokodvo [the King's party] regime does not recognize" (The Times of Swaziland, 9 March 1992, p. 1).

In addition to this flat defiance of the royal decree, HUMARAS branch of Mbabane, the capital city, at a later date called on all its members to boycott the deliberations of the second royal commission because participation in this process would be tantamount to "praising and allowing the Tinkhundla system to continue" (The Swazi Observer, 13 April 1992, p.3). Furthermore, the

Mbabane branch of HUMARAS advised two of its members, namely, the president and a committee member, who were appointed by the king to serve on the Tinkhundla Review Commission to decline their appointments or resign from HUMARAS (The Swazi Observer, April 13, 1992 p.3). Nonetheless, the call to decline the king's appointment seemed improper for the president of HUMARAS, Mr. S. Mkhombe, who accepted the appointment in his personal capacity rather than as president of HUMARAS. On the other hand, the other committee member of HUMARAS, Mr. Mandla Hlatshwako, declined the king's appointment to the Tinkhundla Review Commission. Despite these conflicting actions of two of its members, however, the position of HUMARAS as an organization was that the Tinkhundla Review Commission was yet another royal tradition which was imposed on the Swazi (The Swazi Observer, 19 April 1992, p. 1).

The fact that the HUMARAS position on the 1992 Decree was widely shared by most political groups in Swaziland was attested by a similar response to the decree by Dr. Ambrose Zwane, the leader of the banned Ngwane National Liberatory Congress (NNLC). Dr. Zwane also rejected the king's decree and urged his followers to boycott the proceedings of the Tinkhundla Review Commission. For Dr. Zwane, the only legitimate constitution for Swaziland was the repealed Westminster Constitution:

We reject and do not encourage members of the Ngwane National Liberatory Congress to present their views as individuals to Vusela II [the Tinkhundla Review Commission]. . . We recognize only the Independence Constitution because it spells out everybody's rights, including the rights of the His Majesty and the Prime Minister. We believe that the king should rule with that constitution (The Weekend Sun, 17 March - 10 April 1992, p.9).

Elitism and the Preference for the Westminster Constitution

The most common interpretation of the conflict between Swazi political elites and the urban commoners who advocate Western political democracy is that the radical opponents of the status quo are 'Westernized' Swazi who have been influenced by missionaries and other foreign ideologies such as Western democracy or radical socialism. As I noted in Chapter Three, scholars such as Kuper (1986a), Sundkler (1976), and Potholm (1974) tend to interpret the political events following the 1973 Decree as signifying "the triumph of Swazi tradition" over divisive Western influences. These researchers also tend to over-emphasize the legitimacy and the genius of the Swazi monarchy for its ability to build a strong stable state upon existing indigenous institutions. As a result, these perspectives define the political conflict between the Swazi rulers and the urban commoners in terms of the "culture clash" between "a conservative monarchy" and "detrribalized" or Westernized Swazi (cf. Kuper 1986a:16; Sundkler 1976:240; Potholm 1974: 221).

These interpretations fail to take full cognizance of the internal dialectic between the Swazi rulers and the urban commoners. In contrast, I reiterate my earlier position that the conflict between the Swazi rulers and the urban commoners should be interpreted in terms of the notion of the "double dialectic" as employed by Comaroff in her ethnography of the encounter between the dominant European culture and the indigenous polity of the Tshidi of South Africa (Comaroff 1985). As I noted in Chapter One, Comaroff uses this concept of the "double dialectic" to make an analytic distinction between the general cultural conflict between Western and indigenous institutions and values, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, internal conflicts among the indigenous competitive social 'classes' and groups which were accentuated by the interactions between the two distinct cultures. This model can be used in the Swazi case to highlight the fact that the conflict described in this chapter is not between "conservative aristocrats" and "detrribalized commoners", but between two indigenous social groups pursuing conflicting political interests.

For example, a close examination of the use of "tradition" in the struggle between the two contesting social groups reveals that the term "Swazi tradition" does not signify a system of commonly held values which are shared by most Swazi. Rather, the term Swazi "tradition" or its official variant "Swazi law and custom", is now used as an ideological term with strong political connotations. For instance, to many urban commoners, as I indicated in this

chapter, the term "Swazi tradition" is perceived as an ideology in the negative sense to signify a mask which has been deceitfully manipulated by "a clique" of political elites to preserve their entrenched privileges as a social group (The Times of Swaziland Sunday, 15 Dec. 1991, p.1). For many critics of the Swazi regime, then, "Swazi tradition" as embodied in the invented traditions outlined in this chapter is no longer perceived as a neutral social force that binds the Swazi together, but as a specific political ideology which has been imposed on the people. As the secretary general of Pudemo put it:

Any political system that is not based on the will of the people is unacceptable. Government should be formed by the people and work for the people. [The] Tinkhundla lacks this respect. It lacks accountability. It lacks a respect for human rights and has promoted the highest degree of corruption and nepotism. . . I reject the Vusela strategy [the Royal Visitations] because the people were told about what is good with the Tinkhundla system and no votes were taken to find out how many [people] rejected the Tinkhundla (The Times of Swaziland Sunday, 19 Jan. 1992, p.15).

The conflict between the Swazi aristocratic rulers and the urban commoners, therefore, cannot be said to have been caused by the importation of Western values and institutions such as mission churches, democracy, socialism, and the ideology of human rights. Rather, these social forces have furnished many Swazi commoners with new weapons of resistance against what they regard as an unjust or "untraditional regime".

As Comaroff and Comaroff (1990) point out in their study of the church and colonialism in South Africa, the politics of Western institutions such as the church and capitalism did not simply entail the use of force and coercion to inculcate Western values like individual self-determination, equality, and the separation of church and state. Rather, the primary significance of Western institutions such as the mission churches lay in providing the converts with novel symbols or "new ways of seeing and being" which were re-worked and appropriated in different ways and in different contexts as tools of protest against various forms of domination, including chiefly hegemony, missionary domination, and apartheid at large (1990:144-246; 1991:154).

For example, in the South African context, the mission churches were used by some converts as social institutions through which to defy and challenge local chiefs, on the one hand, and also as a forum through which the early leaders of the African National Congress (ANC) spearheaded their struggle against apartheid, on the other hand. Some African converts even seceded from mission churches and formed their own churches in protest against racial discrimination. Above all, the majority of black converts to Christianity belonged to independent churches within which they invented religious rituals that signified a rejection of and resistance to some of the dominant Western values embodied by mission churches. As Comaroff shows, the Zionist rituals of purification and healing stress a holistic religion which does

not separate body and spirit, or religion and politics (Comaroff and Comaroff 1990: 230-246; 1991:254).

Thus, in South Africa many of the functions that came to be fulfilled by the churches were shaped by the converts themselves. As Comaroff and Comaroff put it: "For whatever the intentions of the mission [mission church], its converts remade the sociology of the church in their own image" (1990:230). Likewise, the use by many Swazi commoners of Western symbols and values such as the church, democracy, and human rights should be seen as attempts to appropriate new concepts for local use in the on-going political struggle to challenge and resist a 'traditionalist' government which is not recognized as representative of the wishes and aspirations of the majority of the Swazi.

However, to the existing Swazi rulers, on the other hand, the notion of "Swazi Tradition" has been used in the narrow sense to signify non-Western indigenous values which are inherently incompatible with Western institutions such as multi-party politics. Indeed, the Swazi rulers have been consistent in their argument that the 'Swazi democracy' which was represented by the Tinkhundla Government was not only incompatible with Western democracy, but also that multi-party politics would never work in Swaziland. Invariably, the Swazi political leaders equated democracy with social division and guerilla warfare, while "Swazi democracy" was equated with peace and stability. For instance, Prince Gabheni, a high ranking prince and senior civil servant made a

public speech aimed at discrediting the demands for multi-party democracy made by the Swaziland Youth Congress (SWAYOCO) in which he said:

The Youth cannot rule this country because they claim to know everything and could create fighting and bloodshed. Copying from other countries will not help us because [while] they have democracy, they also have different constitutions. We must repair our own constitution before we can create a new one (The Times of Swaziland, December 3, 1991 p.7).

This tendency to present the Tinkhundla Government as the immutable antithesis of Western democracy, on the one hand, and the equation of the Tinkhundla government with peace and material progress, on the other hand, was forcefully articulated by the governor of Ludzidzini or the traditional prime minister following the public rejection of the King's Decree of 1992 by various urban groups. In a passionate plea to the nation made over the government radio station in April 1992, the governor, Councillor Mngayi Fakudze, cautioned the nation against political activists who were advocating multi-party democracy. He emphasized that the underlying goal of multi-party politics was to eradicate the divinely instituted Swazi monarchy, thereby inviting turmoil and political instability into the country:

Look at the people of Ethiopia today. Someone came and promised them heaven and earth. he convinced them that their king [the Emperor] was an evil man. Today they are regretting and they are praying before the Emperor's grave. Do you want the same thing to happen here? (The Swazi Observer, 4 April 1992 p. 5).

Thus, the Swazi rulers use Swazi tradition as a polemic against the incessant calls for democracy by many urban commoners, and "Swazi tradition" and Western democracy are presented as two irreconcilable traditions. This rigidity in the use and application of the new royal traditions such as the Tinkhundla government constitutes a salient aspect of what Hobsbawm would call an invented tradition (1983:4).

The conflict between the Swazi aristocrats and the urban commoners, then, should not be seen simply as a "cultural conflict", but also as an ideological conflict. On the one hand, is the ideology of cultural nationalism which has been presented by the Swazi aristocrats who advocate absolute monarchical rule, while, on the other hand, is the ideology of political pluralism which has been presented primarily by urban commoners who advocate a return to the constitutional monarchy. In the absence of democratic elections by secret ballot or a nationwide referendum, it remains unclear which faction represents the views of the majority of the Swazi. However, a recent opinion poll conducted by the Times of Swaziland among its readers in February 1992 disclosed that "the overwhelming majority of the urban Swazi thought that the system [Tinkhundla Government] was a failure; and the overwhelming majority wanted the multi-party system of government" (The Times of Swaziland, 1 March 1992, p. 4).

The Role of the Easter Ritual in the Political Conflict: Conclusion

To summarize the key points of this chapter, it is essential to emphasize the role of the royal Easter ritual in the conflict between the aristocrats and the urban commoners in post-colonial Swaziland. The basic argument of this chapter is that the dominant theme of the Easter ritual in post-colonial Swaziland has been linked to the political ideologies of Swazi invented traditions such as the Tinkhundla Government and the Liqoqo which were promulgated as the embodiments of the "Swazi indigenous democracy". However, this historical process of the invention of tradition by the Swazi rulers has been consistently challenged by many Swazi commoners through hidden and overt political actions. Again, the process of resistance to royal traditions ranges from resistance to the royal Easter ritual, the unwritten Tinkhundla constitution, the Liqoqo, and the 1992 decree.

Significantly, I have shown that various social groups of commoners such as the mission churches, the Swaziland Youth Congress, the People's United Democratic Movement, and the Human Rights Association of Swaziland have rejected the royal traditions mainly because these new traditions were perceived by many as political instruments of social control, and not as the authentic embodiments of indigenous values as the Swazi rulers claim. Thus, all the new royal traditions described in this chapter have been fraught with contradiction and ambiguity.

The major contradiction regarding the Swazi invented traditions has been that these 'traditional' practices, which were intended to restore social harmony in modern Swaziland, have inadvertently become divisive royal practices which have crystallized the conflict between the Swazi rulers and many commoners. This observation equally applies to the royal Easter ritual whose dominant theme, as I have shown, is partisan, polemical and exclusive.

Thus in contrast to existing studies which depict the royal Easter ritual as a nationalistic force which unites the monarchy with formerly estranged converts of mission churches (Kuper 1986a:142), or as a ceremony which fosters Swazi cultural unity (Sundkler 1976:242-243), I have stressed that the dominant theme of the royal Easter ritual advocates an ideology which is inimical to the concerns and political aspirations of many Swazi belonging to mission churches.

NOTE

1. The notion of the invention of tradition has been used by many anthropologists in the wider sense to underscore the fact that all traditions are cultural constructs, and that the distinction between genuine and non-authentic traditions is largely a theoretical and analytical construct (cf. Handler and Linnekin 1984; Hanson 1989; Linnekin 1991; Badone 1992). In this study, however, I follow the interpretation of this process as outlined by Hobsbawm and Ranger (1983), who focus on the social practices which have been constructed primarily by specific social groups primarily for political purposes. Significantly, in this study I use this concept in a restricted sense to signify the process of the manipulation of indigenous traditions by political elites in ex-colonies.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION

This study has focused on the royal Easter ritual and its complex role in the continuing political conflict between the monarchy and many urban commoners in post-colonial Swaziland. I have paid particular attention to the relationship between the ritual and political actions pursued by urban commoners who wish to limit the absolute political power of the Swazi monarchy. I have argued that the royal Easter ritual can be seen as a newly invented tradition which depicts the Swazi dual monarchy as Christian rulers who are also the divinely appointed custodians of all Christian churches in the country.

I note, however, that this new Swazi doctrine has been repeatedly contested by most Swazi commoners belonging to Mission Churches in Swaziland. The most prevalent forms of resistance to this ritual have been abstinence from the ceremony and covert contestation of the new 'traditional' doctrine. Above all, I contend that this pattern of resistance to the royal Easter ritual has been linked to widespread political acts of resistance undertaken by various groups of urban commoners who were opposed to absolute monarchical rule.

In this concluding chapter I present a summary of the main findings of this study. In particular, I indicate the contributions of this work to ethnographic and other related interdisciplinary studies of ritual and power relations, cultural invention, and missionary evangelism.

The Key Findings of this Study

The first significant observation of this study is that the formation and meaning of the royal Easter ritual in the colonial era was facilitated both by the spirit of cultural resistance to Western missionary evangelism and by the internal political conflict between the monarchy and the commoners. This assertion represents a crucial point of departure from existing structural-functional interpretations of the ritual which have been given by Kuper (1986a), Sundkler (1976), and Fogelqvist (1986). These three ethnographies, as I note in Chapter Two, tend to ignore and relativize the internal conflict between the monarchy and the commoners which was crystallized by the new social changes engendered by colonial rule and missionary evangelism. Instead, these studies tend to over-emphasize the cultural conflict between the indigenous Swazi institutions and Western colonial institutions and practices.

Typically, existing studies depict the royal Easter ritual as a national symbol of cultural resistance against Western cultural domination. For instance, the ritual has been interpreted as a Christian version of the indigenous ritual of

kingship (Kuper 1978a; Fogelqvist 1986), an agent of Swazi cultural unity (Sundkler 1976), and a reflection of the integrative role of the monarchy in post-colonial Swaziland (Sundkler 1976; Kuper 1986a)1.

In contrast, this study has attempted to move beyond the "solidarity thesis" (cf. Bell 1992:171) and examine the meaning of the royal Easter ritual against the background of the internal political conflict between the Swazi monarchy and many commoners during the colonial era. My interpretation of this historical process follows Comaroff's "double dialectical approach" to the analysis of the impact of colonialism on the indigenous societies of South Africa (1985:1-4).

As I note in Chapter One, Comaroff interprets social and cultural changes among the Tshidi of South Africa from the perspective of the double dialectic between the colonizer and the colonized, on one hand, and the internal dialectic among the Tshidi themselves on the other hand (1985:1-4). This perspective highlights the agency of the indigenous Tshidi in shaping the breadth of the colonial encounter by reproducing, resisting, and appropriating particular aspects of the dominant Western culture. Comaroff also draws attention to the role of colonialism in exacerbating "internal contradictions within the Tshidi system itself" (Comaroff 1985:2).

I employ this conceptual framework in the Swazi context to underscore the role of the mission churches in sharpening the historical conflict

between the monarchy and the commoners in Swaziland. In Chapter Two, I show that the royal Easter ritual was formed by King Sobhuza II mainly to counteract the divisive role of missionary evangelism among the Swazi, especially because the permanent establishment of mission stations in Swazi society had unwittingly fuelled the historical tensions between the monarchy and the commoners. I began my description of this conflict by pointing out the ambiguous role of the mission churches in Swaziland, namely that they contributed to the disruption of indigenous Swazi polity while at the same time attracting many converts from among the Swazi commoners, thus aggravating the historical tension between the monarchy and the commoners which can be traced to the formation of Swazi state in the middle of the nineteenth century (cf. Kuper 1947a:15-16; Bonner 1980).

I show that the social and political role of mission churches in Swaziland included the conversion of many commoners, the detraction of the authority of the aristocrats, the relativization of royal ceremonies, and the advocacy of liberal values such as individual liberty and democracy (Kuper 1947b:109-126; 1978a:210,250). I contend and demonstrate that while the early Swazi converts were coerced by the missionaries to abandon most of their traditional practices, many commoners and women were attracted to the mission churches by the material and social benefits of conversion, which included formal education; employment; and 'exemption' from arranged

marriages, polygyny, and mandatory participation in royal ceremonies such as the Incwala (cf. Kuper 1947b). Thus, Christianity contributed to the development of a new habitus among most commoners belonging to mission churches. This habitus includes a long history of covert and overt resistance to the official ideology of Swazi cultural nationalism, which includes the non-participation in major royal ceremonies, and the relentless advocacy and striving for political democracy.

Following Bourdieu (1977), I argue that the habitus of many converts to Mission Churches cannot be simply attributed to missionary indoctrination, but can also be seen as a pattern of behaviour which was informed by the political, social, and economic concerns of the then existing social groups in Swazi society. As existing studies of the role of mission churches among the Kaguru of Tanzania (Beidelman 1982) and the Tshidi of South Africa (Comaroff 1985) indicate, the first group Christians were socially marginal, and for them conversion signified relative freedom from detested customary obligations and an opportunity for social mobility.

Therefore, when King Sobhuza II established the new royal Easter ritual in collaboration with the "Zionist churches" in 1937, this ceremony did not simply represent an attempt to preserve or promote Swazi cultural unity which was threatened by the dominant Western culture. In addition, the royal Easter ritual became part and parcel of the king's polemical ideology of cultural

nationalism which valorized ethnic identity and ascribed statuses in direct opposition to the liberal values advocated by most mission churches.

As I indicate in Chapter Two, the formation of the royal Easter ritual coincided with the Swazi "counter-reformation" in which the monarchy created a series of apparently unchanging 'Swazi' customs in an attempt to restore the pre-colonial absolute rule of the monarchy. These new 'Swazi' customs included the effort to introduce the umbutfo regimental system in public schools (Kuper 1947a), the politicization of the libandla or the Swazi National Council (Owen 1961), the designation of trade unions and party-politics as non-Swazi (Kuper 1978a), and the formation of the royal Easter ritual. However, these new 'Swazi' traditions were rejected by many urban commoners who subscribed to Western democratic values, and this conflict culminated in the repeal of the Western form of political democracy in post-colonial Swaziland in 1973.

The conflictual background of the royal Easter ritual has had a significant impact on the meaning of the ritual to the two main Christian groups in Swazi society, namely the "Zionist" and "mission" Christians. The Zionist Christians - who constitute the main participants at the royal Easter ceremony, and represent the poor, rural, less educated, peasant-proletariat - perceive the king as their advocate and mentor (Sundkler 1976). As I point out in Chapter Two, King Sobhuza II defended the Zionist churches against the British colonial administration which sought to ban Zionist churches for fear that these

indigenous Churches were linked with the subversive black nationalism of South Africa (Sundkler 1976; Cazziol 1987). King Sobhuza II also supported the proliferation of the indigenous Zionist churches by assuming the role of patron of the League of African Churches in Swaziland since 1937, thus giving official recognition to indigenous churches at a time when most mission churches dismissed the Zionist churches as syncretistic and non-Christian (cf. Kuper 1947b; Kasenene 1987; Cazziol 1987).

In recognition of the patronage of King Sobhuza II, Swazi Zionist Christians began the practice of celebrating the Easter ceremony with the Swazi royalty at Lobamba, the royal capital residence. But this occasion also served as an annual convention for all Swazi independent churches which fell under the auspices of the League of African Churches in Swaziland, the body which coordinated and promoted the interests of the Zionist churches in Swaziland (Sundkler 1976). Since that period, the leaders of the royal Easter ceremony have always been Zionist pastors in conjunction with official representatives from the royalty (Kasenene 1987).

Significantly, the Zionists have rightly classified the Easter ritual as the inkonzo yebukhosi (literally "a royal liturgy") in the view of the mandatory and active role of the king, the queen mother, and the queens in the ceremony. In particular, the king has been accorded an exalted, 'priestly' role in the ceremony and his moral guidance is equated with the divinely inspired wisdom

of leading biblical leaders like King Solomon (Sundkler 1975). Hence the popular, essentialist interpretation of the ritual by Sundkler (1976), Kuper (1978a), and Foglqvist (1986), as a "Christianised" ritual of Swazi kingship.

But many mission Christians, who until recently represented the better educated, skilled urban commoners, continued to absent themselves from the royal Easter ritual. The social and political significance of the mission Christians lies in the fact that they constitute most of the urban commoners who hold influential positions in modern Swaziland. As I note in Chapter Two, most of the teachers, nurses, clergy, and civil servants are graduates of the main mission churches such as the Methodist Church, the Anglican Church, the Church of the Nazarene, the Roman Catholic Church, and the Lutheran Church. Like other mission churches in other African societies (cf. Beidelman 1982; Comaroff 1991), these institutions have served as an indirect training field for future leaders in the modern bureaucratic sector.

Ironically, in spite of the nationalistic sentiments which accompanied the attainment of political Independence in 1968, the Swazi clergy who assumed administrative roles in the mission churches have continued to maintain their 'cultural' distance from the royal Easter ritual. This trend was even followed by other educated Swazi clergy who formed their own independent churches in protest against racial discrimination within the mission churches. Upon the elimination of racial discrimination in their respective

mission churches, these Swazi clergy re-aligned themselves with their counterparts in the liberal mission churches, and they distanced themselves from the royal Easter ritual.

The mission Christians did not only abstain from most of the royal Easter ritual, but they also posed a continuing political threat to the Swazi monarchy by openly advocating and striving for a constitutional monarchy. As I indicate in Chapter Two, the main political opponents of the monarchy in the early 1960's were Swazi commoners affiliated with mission churches, and they justified their advocacy of a constitutional monarchy on the basis of "Christian principles" (cf. Sundkler 1976).

Thus the meaning of the royal Easter ritual in the colonial era extended beyond the concerns with Swazi ethnic identity and nationalism as highlighted by Sundkler (1976) and Kuper (1986a). More importantly, the royal Easter ritual revealed the endogenous tension between the Swazi monarchy and many urban commoners. This tension was reflected by, among other things, the polemical discourses at the Easter ritual, and the widespread tendency of many mission Christians to ignore the royal Easter ritual in spite of concerted efforts by the monarchy to convert the ritual into a national, "interdenominational" Christian ceremony.

The second key observation of this study, therefore, is that the intended stabilizing role of royal Easter ritual in modern Swaziland has been

largely compromised by the partisan involvement of the monarch in the administration of the post-colonial Swazi Government. King Sobhuza II did not only compete with the urban commoners for the control of the modern government, but also alienated many urban commoners through the Decree of April 1973 when he banned party politics and assumed real executive power over the government and the state. Since that time, many urban commoners in post-colonial Swaziland have become cynical about and disenchanted with the monarchy. Typically the monarchy is perceived as a partisan, authoritarian regime which is manipulated by an unpopular "clique" of aristocrats.

This disenchantment with the monarchy is reflected in the attitudes of many urban commoners towards royal rituals such as the Incwala and Easter rituals. In Chapter Three and Chapter Four, I demonstrate that while the local press depicts the Incwala as "a national prayer" (cf. The Times of Swaziland, 18 Dec. 1991, p.28), and the Easter ritual as "the traditional Easter Sunday service" (cf. The Swazi Observer, 21 April 1992, p.1), in practice, these ceremonies had become exclusive, partisan rituals which reinforce the group solidarity of those who support the existing political regime rather than rituals which promote national integration.

As I point out in Chapter Three, although the Incwala ritual was designed to reflect the balance of power between the monarchy and the commoners (Kuper 1986a), and the sacredness and neutrality of the king

(Beidelman 1966), in 1991-92 the main participants were largely persons who subscribed to the political ideology of the monarchy. These Swazi included elderly commoners who were economically more dependent on communal land owned by the king on behalf of the nation, and high ranking civil servants who indicated their political loyalty to the regime, in part, by dancing the Incwala. As I note in Chapter Three, at the Incwala there is no room for political dissidents, and every member of the Emabutfo or the regiments pledges allegiance to the king. Thus the Incwala participants are not only presumed to be supportive of the monarchy, but they are also bound by an irreversible oath of allegiance to the king. In many respects, then, the Incwala ceremony constitutes a political convention for the fervent supporters of the existing political regime. For example, at the end of the Incwala ceremony of 1991-92, amidst incessant calls by various urban associations and illegal political parties for the restoration of multi-party politics in Swaziland, the king informed the emabutfo or royal regiments that the Tinkhundla Government would be reviewed and not revoked. Significantly, this news was welcomed and publicly approved by the emabutfo through the public acclamation, Bayethe!

Missing from the Incwala ritual, then, are many urban-based Swazi who neither feel obliged to participate nor perceive the Incwala as a symbol of Swazi cultural heritage. These Swazi include mission Christians who regard the Incwala as a rite belonging to a different religion, and those Swazi who abstain

from the ritual due to their dissenting political views. To these Swazi, as I indicate in Chapter Three, participation in the Incwala ritual signifies nothing but assent to the religious and political ideology embodied by the ceremony.

Likewise, the royal Easter ritual, which has been mistakenly described as "a national prayer service" (cf. The Swazi News, 18 April 1992, p.1), actually reinforces the group solidarity of those Swazi who endorse the absolute rule of the monarchy in post-colonial Swaziland. In Chapter Four I demonstrate and argue that the proportional representation of the Zionist Christians at the ritual, the dominant theme, and the polemical texture of the discourses reveal that the royal Easter ritual has become a partisan rite which embodies the politicised ideology of the modern Swazi state.

Furthermore, like the Incwala ritual which is frequented by rural, poor, elderly Swazi, the Easter ritual is patronized by the Zionist Christians who represent the majority of Swazi who reside on communal land controlled by the monarchy. The Zionist clergy who play a major role in shaping the structure and the dominant theme of the royal Easter ritual continue to be comparatively less educated than their counterparts belonging to mission churches. Again, like the emabutfo or the regiments which regularly participated in the Incwala, the Zionist participants are unequivocal in their political support of the monarchy. As I point out in Chapter Four, the special hymns for the queen mother and the king glorify and apotheosize the dual monarchs, on the one hand, while the

Zionist sermons depict the Swazi monarchs as Christian rulers whose governance is sanctioned by God, on the other hand.

Yet this legitimating process is severely undermined by the non-participation of most Swazi Christians belonging to mission churches. As I point out in Chapter Four, both the Swazi monarchy and the Zionist leaders view the absence of most of the mission churches with grave concern. For instance, the non-participation of the mission christians in the royal Easter ritual has been characterized by one Zionist clergyman as the "denigrating [of] Easter royal service" (Easter Sunday, March 28 1975: Archives of Swaziland Broadcasting and Information Services). In 1990 King Mswati III urged Zionist church leaders to examine the problem of the habitual absence of most of the mission church leaders from the royal Easter ceremony (Liqcolo, April 17, 1990: Archives of Swaziland Broadcasting and Information Services).

The deliberate absence of most mission christians from the royal Easter ritual has contributed to the polemical texture of the ritual. As I point out in Chapter Four, the royalty designates Zionist clergy as "great heroes" (Liqcolo, April 17, 1990) and "elders of the nation [who] teach us good values which will stabilize the nation, and not a legacy of division which will destroy us" (Lunyawo LwaJesu, March 30, 1991: Archives of Swaziland Broadcasting and Information Services). mission christians, on the other hand, are portrayed as misguided,

"detrribalized" Swazi (cf. Easter Sunday, March 28, 1975) or as persons who despise and oppose the monarchy (cf. Good Friday, March 29, 1991).

Yet this polemical discourse is not one-sided. Many Swazi clergy belonging to mission churches have been critical of the close alliance between the Zionist clergy and the monarchy. This criticism was often expressed at the Lunyawo LwaJesu, the Saturday Session of the Easter ceremony, in which the Swazi clergy discuss contentious issues pertaining to clashes between biblical norms and Swazi traditions. As I show in Chapter Four, this debating session has been used by many non-Zionist clergy as the social space wherein they can challenge the dominant theme of the Easter ritual which depicts the Swazi monarchs as divinely appointed custodians of the Christian Church in Swaziland.

Unlike most of the Zionist clergy who tend to draw a symbolic equation between the Swazi monarchs and biblical saints, the mission clergy emphasized the essential equality of all Swazi before God and the supremacy of the biblical laws over Swazi custom. A case in point is the debate concerning the need to baptize the king. As I show in Chapter Four, this issue is raised by mission Christians who argue that the king cannot claim to be a Christian unless he is baptized. This view is flatly rejected by the Zionists and by the king himself on the grounds that the Swazi king is not only God's viceroy here on

earth but that he will also serve as the indvuna or spokesperson for the Swazi nation in heaven.

My contention is that the contest between the Zionist clergy and many mission christians on the role and meaning of Swazi kingship and traditions has strong political links to the prevailing conflict between the monarchy and many urban commoners over the absolute rule of the king in modern Swaziland. In contrast to the popular notion that the Easter ceremony strengthens national unity (Sundkler 1975:243) and promotes harmonious relations between the monarchy and mission churches (Kuper 1986a:142-144), I emphasize the fact that the Easter ceremony reflects the continuing polarization in Swazi society between the monarchy and most mission churches. I argue that this division is intimately related to widespread conflict between the Swazi rulers and many urban Swazi commoners over the merits and demerits of the existing Tinkhundla form of government which provides for the absolute rule of the monarchy.

As Geertz (1973) and other writers on ritual have shown (cf. Fairley 1989), communal rituals in many developing societies do not always reinforce social harmony, but also mirror and even trigger latent political struggles between competitive social groups. Likewise, the tension between the monarchy and mission christians, which is reflected in the polemics of the Easter ritual and through the non-participation of most mission christians in the ritual, can be

related to the political contest between the aristocrats and commoners over the distribution of political power in post-colonial Swazi society.

The third finding of this study, then, is that the internal structure of the royal Easter ritual in contemporary Swazi society embodies two dialectical processes, namely, the dominant process which valorizes, sacralizes, and defines the Swazi monarchy as a Christian institution, on the one hand, and the subordinate resistant process which questions the apotheosization of the Swazi monarchy, on the other hand. I show that the dominant process, in which the Zionist clergy and the royalty construct the new royal Easter ceremony, constitutes the invention of tradition, while the subordinate theme articulated by the non-Zionist clergy represents a subtle act of resistance to the absolute rule of the monarchy.

More importantly, I indicate the strong link between this dialectical process within the context of Easter ritual and the on-going political conflict between the 'traditionalists' and various groups of urban commoners in modern Swaziland. The dominant process of the Easter ritual, as I note in Chapter Five, is an extension of a series of new politicised 'Swazi' traditions invented by the monarchy to offset the persistent demands by many commoners for political democracy. Similarly, the subordinate process of the Easter ritual constitutes an act of resistance which is continuous with other covert and overt forms of

opposition undertaken by various groups of urban commoners since the Decree of 1973.

This finding that the royal Easter ritual embodies both the process of the invention of tradition and subtle resistance to absolute monarchical rule has crucial implications for the meaning of the Easter ritual in modern Swaziland. In the first place, the royal Easter ritual can no longer be seen as a monolithic ceremony in which Swazi Christians gather to "pray for the health of the rulers and the well-being of the nation" as Kuper claims (1986a:142). Secondly, the Easter ritual can no longer be loosely described as a Christianized version of the indigenous belief in an impartial priest-king who symbolizes the Swazi nation (Kuper 1986a; Sundkler 1976; Fogelqvist 1986). Instead, the notion of the invention of the royal Easter as used in this study denotes the construction of a new tradition which espouses a clear political agenda, namely to oppose current political actions carried out by urban commoners who advocate political democracy.

Following Hobsbawm and other writers (Hobsbawm, et al., 1983), I show that the dominant theme of the royal Easter ritual follows the same political agenda as other invented traditions such as the unwritten 'Swazi democracy', the Tinkhundla Government, and the Liqoqo. I argue that like other invented traditions constructed by the Swazi rulers in post-colonial Swaziland, the new royal Easter ritual has been rationalized and instituted on the grounds

that it is both continuous with indigenous Swazi traditions, and also that it constitutes an immutable essence of Swazi cultural heritage.

As an invented tradition, the dominant theme of the Easter ritual portrays the royal Swazi ancestors as Christian rulers whose injunctions ensure the happiness and prosperity for all Swazi. The corollary of this doctrine is that disobedience to the monarchy will bring about chaos and suffering in Swazi society. As I indicate in Chapter Five, the political import of this new doctrine is borne out by its overt political version, namely that the 'traditional' Tinkhundla form of government will ensure political stability, peace, and progress for the nation (cf. Matsebula 1987:261).

On the other hand, the fact that the Easter ritual also embodies the covert subordinate process of resistance against the absolute rule of the monarchy indicates that the tensions reflected at the ritual are not fortuitous but constitute a pattern of opposition to royal hegemony. Following Scott (1990) I argue and show that the negative, lukewarm, and polemical role of the mission churches within and outside of the context of the royal Easter ritual can be seen as "weapons of the weak" (1985) or covert forms of resistance against the hegemony of the monarchy.

As Scott points out, the hidden forms of political dissent which are perpetrated by subordinated groups often constitute a series of 'minor' acts of disobedience or defiance which culminate to open political opposition

(1990:203). Likewise I demonstrate that the habitus of the mission christians in Swaziland extends beyond the widespread absence from, or the selective participation in, the polemics at the Easter ritual to include covert and overt political resistance to the monarchy outside the ritual context. As I show in Chapter Five, the political role of many mission clergy outside the ritual context includes public denunciation of the absolute monarchy through pastoral teachings, and theological discourse, and the advocacy of political democracy.

More importantly, I argue and demonstrate that the resistance process within the royal Easter ritual is also linked to covert and overt extra-parliamentary political actions undertaken by a wider network of urban commoners who oppose the 'traditional' political structure and called for multi-party politics. Taken together, the opponents of absolute monarchy comprise most mission christians, church leaders, college and university students, illegal political activists, and human rights activists.

Therefore, the final conclusion of this study is that the dominant theme of the royal Easter ritual constitutes a partisan tradition which not only compromises the harmonious relations among Swazi Christians, but also reinforces the political divisions between the monarchy and many urban commoners. In particular, I maintain that the dominant theme of the royal Easter ritual in the post-colonial period has been categorically opposed to the

on-going political actions pursued by many urban commoners who challenge the absolute rule of the Swazi monarchy.

Contributions to Scholarship

The first contribution of this study pertains to scholarship on the role of religion in Swazi society. As I have indicated at several stages of this work, the general tendency in existing ethnographic studies of the Easter ritual has been to interpret this ceremony in structural-functionalist terms, thus relativizing the unresolved, political tensions which have been dramatized at critical stages in the post-colonial history of Swaziland. This study, therefore, has attempted to show that the Easter ritual should not be seen simply a latent cohesive force which embodies indigenous integrative principles, but as a newly invented tradition which has been inadvertently disruptive in modern Swazi society.

Secondly, this study will make a contribution to current interpretive studies of communal rituals in modern societies, especially developing countries. Like other ethnographies which interpret ritual as historical, social action which can variously reproduce, construct, and contest dominant social values (Geertz 1973; Ortner 1978; Comaroff 1985), this study has shown that the royal Easter ritual constitutes a dynamic cultural performance whose meaning has been shaped by social changes, historical events, and political forces in modern Swaziland. I indicate that the royal Easter ritual has evolved

from a ritual of national and cultural resistance to colonial domination to a divisive ceremony which reflects and accentuates the continuing internal tensions among the Swazi. As Ortner shows in her study of ritual among the Sherpas (1978), ritual performances do not only reproduce dominant social values, but also denote a complex process in which these values "are actually constructed, or reconstructed, and their fundamentality reestablished in the course of the rituals themselves" (1978:2).

The third contribution of this study pertains to current scholarship on cross-cultural studies of the invention of tradition by political leaders. As I note above, my use of the concept of the invention of tradition follows Hobsbawm and Ranger (1983) to denote the historical process whereby political leaders create and institutionalize new social practices under the pretext that these traditions are continuous with the authentic cultural heritage of their respective nations (Hobsbawm 1983:1-2). This concept represents a critique of essentialist interpretations of rites of rulers, such as royal rituals, which are frequently depicted as immutable embodiments of the core cultural values of particular nations.

As Cannadine's study of British royal ceremonies shows (1983:101-164), although these royal ceremonies as may appear to be invariant, they have undergone substantial changes in form and meaning since the nineteenth century (1983:102). In particular, the British royal rituals have been manipulated

to improve the image of the monarchs at critical periods of British history when there was a need for national solidarity (1983:122). For Cannadine, then, rituals of royalty do not only reaffirm collective sentiments, nor can the monarch be seen primarily as "an exemplary centre" (Cannadine 1987:4). More importantly, royal rituals, like other rituals of rulers, incorporate the "mobilization of bias," and the image of the monarch is altered to suit changing circumstances (1987:4).

Likewise, my description of the changing meaning of the new royal Easter ritual in post-colonial Swaziland constitutes a contribution to current studies of the continuing process of the invention of tradition by political elites in the new nations. As I have noted above, while on the surface the Easter ritual appears to represent the relics of indigenous beliefs concerning the sacred, benevolent, and impartial character of Swazi kingship (Kuper 1986a; Fogelqvist 1986), on closer examination this royal ritual has become a partisan ceremony which signifies social and political division.

Finally, this study constitutes a significant contribution to cross-cultural studies of the use of religious symbols and ritual practices as vehicles of cultural and political resistance. Like many studies on the on the meaning of the new religious movements in 'Third World' countries with a colonial past (cf. Fernandez 1986; Wallace 1999; Worsley 1989; and Comaroff 1985), the present work indicates that the royal Swazi Easter ritual, which has been

dominated by Swazi indigenous churches, represents a protest against Western cultural domination. But unlike the above-named researchers (Comaroff 1985; Fernandez 1986; Wallace 1989), including Comaroff and Comaroff (1990; 1991), and Lan (1985) who highlight the creative use of indigenous rituals and the churches as vehicles of resistance to colonialism in South Africa and Zimbabwe respectively, this study focuses on the internal processes of resistance in Swazi society, which includes the covert protestation of absolute monarchical rule by mission christians.

This study, then, makes a crucial contribution to current studies of the political role of colonial evangelism in developing societies (cf. Beidelman 1982; Comaroff 1991). As the current literature on the subject of Christian evangelism shows (cf. Schneider and Lindenbaum 1987; Ranger 1987; Hefner 1993), the complex process of conversion to mission churches has been shaped by numerous factors, including individual, moral, and political concerns.

Focusing on the politics of mission churches, I have showed that the mission churches serve as symbols of protest against the absolute rule of the monarchy in post-colonial Swaziland. As I indicate in Chapter Five, the subversive role of colonial evangelism in Swaziland extends beyond the relativisation of the royal ceremonies to include the advocacy of overt political acts of resistance against the Swazi monarchy.

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