

SPEECH BY THE KWAZULU-NATAL MINISTER FOR ARTS, CULTURE AND TOURISM MS WEZIWE THUSI DURING THE EVENT TO CELEBRATE THE LIFE OF INKOSI SIGANANDA SHEZI

Good morning Ladies and Gentlemen and thank you for coming. We have gathered here to celebrate a real South African giant, an icon whose heroic deeds will reverberate across the corridors of history, namely Sigananda kaZokufa Shezi. Sigananda Shezi's heroism does not only start with the Bhambatha Uprising but dates back to as early as the reign of King Shaka.

His father, Zokufa, and Shaka were cousins. Nandi, King Shaka's mother, had a sister who got married Mvakela, Zokufa's father. Zokufa was one of King Cetshwayo's advisors and an induna at Mlambongwenya kraal and was skilled in iron smelting and the manufacture of hoes, axes, knives and assegais. Born in the early nineteenth century, Sigananda was a member of King Dingaan's iNkulutshane Regiment in his youth and had witnessed the killing of Piet Retief and his party at Mgungundlovu. Inkosi Sigananda was extremely loyal to King Cetshwayo and fought for him at the famous Battle of Ndongakusuka.

Inkosi Sigananda's relationship with Bhambatha went beyond military activities. Sigananda himself had once been cared for by Mancinza (Bambatha's father) and was a policeman at the magistrate's office in Grey town about 1871. After more than a decade of absence from Zululand, he was invited by King Cetshwayo to return as the Inkosi of amaChube. Sigananda also participated in the Anglo-Zulu War of 1879, and during the war of 1883 had provided Cetshwayo with refuge at his kraal, Enhlweni, on the edge of the Nkandla Forest. Sigananda also fought with the Usuthu at the Battle of Thukela on December 2, 1856. In 1884 Sigananda also participated at the Battle of Khothongweni at the side of Usuthu.

When the Bhambatha Uprising started, Siganda and his subjects refused to pay the notorious Poll Tax and this led them to stage an open defiance on 17 April, 1906. Siganda never sold his people and when the colonialists wanted him to betray Bhambatha, he instead offered the latter refuge and joined him in the Uprising. He further refused to give evidence against Bhambatha during the trial and for this he was detained for 38 days. It is reported that he was already 92 years and very healthy but because of prison treatment, together with other unexplained incidents, he began to fall sick and eventually died under mysterious circumstances. Siganda will always be remembered for his selflessness and loyalty to the Kings (Shaka, Cetshwayo and Dinuzulu) and the African people.

The formation of the South African National Native Congress in 1912 therefore was largely influenced and encouraged by the heroism of people like Siganda. Siganda can be rightly credited with being one of the first people to participate in what has been referred to as the pioneering guerilla warfare in the world, namely the Bhambatha Uprising of 1906.

As the people of KwaZulu-Natal, we are proud to be associated with such a great hero who shared greatness with the likes of Patrice Lumumba, Mao Tse Tung, Ho Chi Minh, Ernesto Che Guevara, Thomas Sankara and many others in advancing the concept of freedom. We are also proud that it is also here in KwaZulu-Natal that the world peace movement started with Inkosi Albert Luthuli becoming the first African to win the Nobel Peace Prize and Gandhi becoming a prophet for peace influencing Nelson Mandela and Martin Luther King. We are gathered here therefore not to mourn that Siganda died but to rejoice that he lived a complete life of selflessness that brought us where we are today.

As we celebrate the life of Siganda I want to challenge the people of this province, especially the academics, intellectuals and the youth to devise innovative strategies to highlight our distorted history. Our history is distorted not only from the cultural and racial point of view but even in terms of gender. Women, in particular, must rise up because I refuse to believe that the Bhambatha Uprising was about men only, otherwise we would not be having the descendants of Siganda and Bhambatha today. Let us

shame those ignorant and mischievous patriarchs who want the world to believe that the history of KwaZulu-Natal is the history of male military activities. This distortion ignores the fact that people sometimes call this part of the world, the land of Mthaniya, a woman. As a woman myself I challenge all women, especially those in universities and other professional circles to work with older men and women who know and understand facts of the Bhambatha Uprising.

The other challenge is directed to the communities themselves. The Premier has begun the process of the establishment of Local Heritage Forums. We expect the people of KwaZulu-Natal through all the municipalities to come with creative and innovative strategies to celebrate their local heritages. We are currently planning for 2010 and beyond and this is a very good opportunity to say to the international visitors 'we have a history before, after and beyond a man called Jan van Riebeeck. We have our local histories too.

In the final analysis, I want to congratulate the Amachube people who gave us Sigananda, one of history's supreme heroes. I also want to thank the Premier who has made it his mission to revive the love of heritage in this province. The fact that we have debates and discourses on heritage matters is because he made it his task to bring heritage to the radar screen.

Thank you