

## Chapter 5

# Anatomy of Traditional Leadership and Ingonyama Trust in KwaZulu-Natal Province

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### Introduction

The traditional leadership system profoundly connects to the Ingonyama Trust in South Africa (Ingonyama Trust Board, 2019a). According to Turner (2014), traditional leadership describes the management systems of traditional groups, which are frequently based on female traditional leaders who have authority and impact on their community. Lynd (2021) asserts that the Ingonyama Trust has a tight association with His Majesty, the traditional head of the Zulu people, hence the connection between the two. Chigwata (2016) posits that traditional leaders have an intimate connection with the people they represent since they are closest to the community. This means they are near their subjects and live in the same communities. Hence, they have a good idea of their people's issues and challenges. The 2003 White Paper on Traditional Leadership and Governance establishes a national framework for South Africa's traditional leadership institutions (Republic of South Africa, 2003). According to Maditsi (2018), traditional leaders are in charge because of the community's deeply rooted beliefs and customs. The critics of the Ingonyama Trust, such as Makhaye (2020), raised concern over the consolidation of power and authority in the hands of one person, claiming that this could compromise democratic principles and open the door for misuse. This has been the issue with the Ingonyama Trust, which has absolute power over land without outside oversight mechanisms.

This chapter, therefore, interrogates the dynamics relating to access, usage, and traditional governance through the Ingonyama Trust in the KwaZulu-Natal Province. It relies on secondary sources of information such as journals, books, and government policy documents. The chapter uses a systems approach that views traditional leadership as a multi-faceted entity with kings, chiefs, and indunas guided by traditional councils, systems, and procedures.

This chapter contributes to administrative and political scholarship in managing and implementing land under the Ingonyama Trust meaningfully for people's development and empowerment. This chapter is qualitative in nature and employs a systematic literature review. First, the chapter provides the conceptualisation of traditional leadership. Secondly, the history of traditional leadership and then the emergence of the Ingonyama

Trust in KwaZulu-Natal province of South Africa is traced. Thirdly, legislative frameworks for governing the Ngonyama Trust are provided, and finally the findings and analysis.

## **Literature Review**

### **Defining Traditional Leadership**

Traditional leadership is based on the belief of sacred traditions that have existed since time immemorial (Baloyi, 2016). Traditional leadership generally refers to the collective establishment of traditional leaders that traditional communities recognise as a structure of leadership and administration (Mdluli, 2022). In essence, traditional leadership is a leadership that developed amid traditional societies or newly developing societies (Yusup, 2022). The concept refers to an establishment assigned power and authority to administer or govern a specific tribe sharing certain norms, cultural values, and customs (Mafunisa, 2019). For Mzelemu (2019), traditional leadership is an organisational establishment responsible for governing through customary law. Thus, Traditional leadership is a governing body that uses traditional laws to allocate land or solve problems.

Other scholars view traditional leadership as a style of leadership where power is vested in hereditary leaders based on traditions, a culture of patronage, and patriarchy perpetuated by a given spiritual authority handed down by the ancestral spirits of hereditary clan leaders (Mawere, Matshidze, Kugara & Madzivhandila, 2021; Koenane, 2017; Mathonsi & Sithole, 2017; De Visser, Steytler & Chigwata, 2021). Traditional leadership refers to customary institutions and structures, systems and governance procedures practised by traditional communities (Baloyi, 2016). Luthuli (2015) holds that the institution of traditional leadership performed multiple functions. Traditional leadership's responsibilities entail the redistribution of land and wealth, protecting communities from negative elements such as colonial demands, collecting taxes, land allocation, and enforcing several laws and policies (Tshishonga & Sithole, 2022). Thus, the effective implementation of these roles renders traditional leaders and the institution of traditional leadership relevant in rural areas even today.

Traditional leadership is when a leader is given authority based on antecedent customs. Sanders (2023) concurs with this view by adding that traditional leadership is predicated on the idea that authority is granted to the leader by historical customs. For Gladstone and Pepion (2016), it permits leadership to be passed down through the generations. Hence, to become a traditional leader, they must be related through blood and often male. Skosana (2019) asserts that traditional leadership is centred on a pyramidal structure for choosing the leaders and running an organisation. This comprises senior people and customary experts who advise on customs to be followed when a king or chief ascends to the throne.