



# Traditional Leaders in a Democracy

## Resources, Respect and Resistance

### A MISTRA PUBLICATION

Post-1994, South Africa's traditional leaders have fought for recognition, and positioned themselves as major players in our political landscape.

Yet their role in a democracy is contested, with leaders often accused of abusing power, disregarding human rights, expropriating resources and promoting tribalism.

Some argue that democracy and traditional leadership are irredeemably opposed and cannot co-exist.

Meanwhile, shifts in the political economy of the former bantustans – the introduction of platinum mining in particular – have attracted new interests and conflicts to these areas, with chiefs often designated as custodians of community interests.

This edited volume explores how chieftaincy is practised, experienced and contested in contemporary South Africa. It explores how those living under the authority of chiefs, in a modern democracy, negotiate or resist these politics in their respective areas.

Chapters in this book are organised around three major sites of contest in the area of traditional leadership: leadership, land and law.

#### SELLING POINTS

- Traces the interdependent relationship between the ANC and the rural chiefly aristocracy.
- Explores ANC policy in rural areas in relation to the apartheid state's bantustans.
- Describes instances in which alliances between corrupt chiefs and mining houses have resulted in the millions destined for community trusts vanishing into private bank accounts.
- Shows the extent to which the original, participatory structures of traditional leadership, with built-in checks on tyranny, have been overridden to create all-powerful chiefs.
- Discusses and debates the tension between SA's constitution, basic rights of citizens in a democracy and traditional law.
- Gives a voice to two chiefs in order to elevate the debate and encompass all perspectives.

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## ABOUT MISTRA

**The Mapungubwe Institute for Strategic Reflection (MISTRA)** is an independent research institute that takes a long-term view on the strategic challenges facing South Africa.

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