1. Description
1.1 Name(s) of society, language, and language family:
Zulu located in South Africa
1.2 ISO code (3 letter code from ethnologue.com):
ISO-639-3 zul
1.3 Location (latitude/longitude):
Kwazulu-Natal
29'00 S
30'00 E
1.4 Brief history:
About 10 million people speak Zulu, most of which live in South Africa and Southern Natal. People who speak Zulu claim to be from the Zulu tribe, the Qwabe tribe, or any Nguni tribe or clan which was resident in Zululand of Natal during Shaka’s time. Shaka was the ruler of the Zulu, and waged war on many near by clans. The Natal drove many tribes south across the Tugela river in their many conquests of war. The finally established themselves along the emaNzimtoti and ezimBokodweni rivers. In more recent years the language has spread, but descendants of the original tribesmen still live there today.
1.5 Influence of missionaries/schools/governments/powerful neighbors:
White Settlers came into contact with the Zulu in the early 19th century and began claiming their lands for themselves. The Zulu were forbidden from having any standing defense of warriors in fear that they might rebel. War was also being fought between different groups of white settlers who both wanted to claim land so the British offered to protect the Zulu from the Boer.
“Early Zulu literature was greatly influenced by Christian missionaries. Thanks to this European influence, the written Zulu language utilizes a Latin-based script. Some of the earliest examples of the written Zulu language consist of translations of Christian scripture texts that date to the mid-1800s. Another important Zulu language text to appear in the 19th century was a translation of John Bunyan’s “Pilgrim’s Progress.”
1.6 Ecology (natural environment):
“The garden province of South Africa, KwaZulu-Natal is a subtropical region of lush and well-watered valleys, washed by the warm Indian Ocean. One of the country’s most popular tourist destinations, the province stretches from Port Edward in the south to the borders of Swaziland and Mozambique to the north.
Its western part is marked by the dramatic Drakensberg mountain range, with several peaks well over 3 000 meters. The range has been awarded World Heritage status for its dramatic natural beauty and the wealth of San Bushman rock art found in its caves – the richest concentration on the continent of Africa.
Between the mountains and the humid, subtropical coastline is savannah grassland, but there are also areas of indigenous forest along the coast. The largest of its many rivers is the Thukela. It is a summer rainfall area, with a climate that ranges from extremely hot along the coast in summer, to heavy snow on the mountains in winter. The Midlands are drier than the coast and can be very cold in winter.”
1.7 Population size, mean village size, home range size, density
There are an estimated 10-11 million living among the largest ethnic group in South Africa.
“What is commonly known as a Zulu village is actually a family setup of huts. Today their are more and more extended families living in a village.”
“The Zulu Village was always circular and built on sloping ground. The main hut of the headman stood at the highest point, with those of his wives hierarchically positioned at both sides. An inner circle housed the wealth of the village - the kraal that kept the cattle and grain. It was a revered area where the spirits of the ancestors were thought to linger. The Zulu homestead was also circular. The foundations were laid by the men of the village who would gather to enjoy brewed beer and bonhomie while they built. Their job was to fix saplings to
the ground then bend and tie them together to form the basic beehive shape. Then it was left to the women to cover the frame with matting woven from thatching grass and bind it with a web of grass ropes.”

2. Economy
2.1 Main carbohydrate staple(s): “ground corn or dry, cooked mealie-meal (corn flour); amadumbe (yams); vegetables; and fruits.”
2.2 Main protein-lipid sources: “...barbecued and boiled meat; amasi (curdled milk)”
2.3 Weapons: Bow and arrow, blowguns?:
“Arms carried in the 1923 mobilization, consisted of two stacking spears, a knobkerry and shield. Throwing spears have not been used by the Maghanas since Shakas time, but they are becoming increasingly familiar with rifles. There are made for them by a tribal blacksmith, with piping taken from European farms. No medicines are used in the blade or shaft of the spear, nor are steamers or other ornaments attached.”
2.4 Food storage:
The normal food storage device is a simple gourd, used to store water, beer, and sometimes curds and milk.
2.5 Sexual division of production:
“In the past, only able-bodied men were supposed to work. Before the 1970s, especially in rural areas, being able to send a written letter and get a reply meant that a young boy was ready to go and look for work. Now Zulus want to complete their high school education. In the mind of the Zulu, work should benefit either one's parents or children and siblings. The first salary (or the bigger portion), therefore, is usually given to parents in return for blessings.”
2.6 Land tenure:
Gardens are planted near homes, requiring clearing of brush and turning the land. The main crops grown are yams, corn, fruit, and sugar cane.
2.7 Ceramics:
“Historically, women in Zulu communities have designed and created ceramic vessels for drinking, transporting, storing, and brewing utshwala, Zulu beer. This nutritional beverage, served to guests and ancestors alike, ties the ceramics to the spiritual life of the Zulu people. Passed from mother to daughter or mother-in-law to daughter-in-law, this rich tradition continues today. Men are exploring their place in this historically women's tradition. Zulu ceramics represent an expanding and developing tradition.
2.8 Specified (prescribed or proscribed) sharing patterns:
The culture of Zulu has become more and more involved with western traditions although it still keeps its original individualities.
2.9 Food taboos:
“Drinking and eating from the same plate was and still is a sign of friendship. It is customary for children to eat from the same dish, usually a big basin. This derives from a "share what you have" belief which is part of ubuntu (humane) philosophy.”
2.10 Canoes/watercraft?
Some watercrafts were used but generally only in the transportation of goods across or down rivers. Generally a bundle of reeds and branches are tethered together; enough to support packages but rarely people.

3. Anthropometry
3.1 Mean adult height (m and f):
Male: between 1660 and 1670 millimeters, or around 65 inches. 2 pg 28
Female: between 1560 and 1570 millimeters, or around 61 inches. 2 pg 28
3.2 Mean adult weight (m and f): Not found

4. Life History, mating, marriage
4.1 Age at menarche (f):
15-19
4.2 Age at first birth (m and f):
Soon after marriage, 15-19
4.3 Completed family size (m and f):
4.4 Inter-birth-interval (f):
4.5 Age first marriage (m and f):
4.6 Proportion of marriages ending in divorce:
It is possible to have a divorce but it rarely occurs.
4.7 Percent marriages polygamous, percent males married polygamosously:
4.8 Bride purchase (price), bride service, dowry?
“The low incidence of polygyny in modern times has also made precise division of the homestead as between
wives unnecessary. A tendency now therefore exists to group kraal huts rather haphazardly about a relatively
well sited main hut. When a woman marries, her husband and some of his relatives and neighbors build her a
hut on his kraal site, or probably on his fathers if he has no land. Except in the case of a chief, the first wife
married is traditionally a man's great wife.”
4.9 Inheritance patterns:
“The Zulu father owns all property which is
passed to the eldest son. Women have no property rights and inherit
nothing from either their fathers or husbands, in fact on the death of the husband a Zulu woman becomes the
property of her brother-in-law if her eldest son is not old enough to take over - they may inherit some
household goods from their mother.” 3
4.10 Parent-offspring interactions and conflict: “Most rural households comprise extended families, brothers
with their wives, unmarried sisters, children, parents, and grandparents all staying together in the same
homestead. As a sign of respect, parents and elders are not called by their first names; instead, kinship names
(surnames) are used.” 1
4.11 Homosexual activities, social attitudes towards homosexuals:
None found
4.12 Pattern of exogamy (endogamy):
“Marriage between abazala is prohibited, for these are the children of a brother and sister. However, implicit
recognition is given to the fact that, unlike the case of the father’s brother’s children, one of the parental
siblings in the case has been incorporated into another descent group by marriage, thus breaking the blood-
tie.” 2 Pg 154
4.13 What is the belief of the role of males in conception; is paternity partible? Are these “other fathers”
recognized?
They do not believe that paternity is partible, although they do believe that the ancestors can influence a man's
fertility. 2
4.14 What is the belief of the mother’s role in procreation exactly? (e.g., “receptacle in which fetus grows”)
A woman’s main Obligations to the child are “To protect herself from physical and psychic harm during
destination, taking the customary post natal ritual observances. And Co-operate with the midwives during child
birth as far as she is able, and keep the customary post natal ritual observances.” 2 Pg 137
4.15 Is conception believed to be an incremental process (i.e., semen builds up over time)?
None Found
4.16 Occurrence of sexual coercion, rape
None Found
4.17 Preferential category for spouse (e.g., cross cousin)
No preference, but incest is illegal.

“Marriage is exogamous; marriage to any person belonging to one's father's, mother's, father's mother's, and
mother's clan is prohibited. If it happens, the ukudabula (literally, “cutting of the blood relationship”) ritual is
performed.” 1
4.18 Do females enjoy sexual freedoms?
No, adultery gives grounds for divorce.
4.19 Evidence of giving gifts to extramarital partners or extramarital offspring
None Found
4.20 If mother dies, whose raises children?
The child remains in the same hut and will be raised by one of the women of the family, first being a sister, then a mother in law.
4.21 Adult sex ratio: number of adult males divided by number of (reproductive) females
None Found
4.22 Evidence for couvades
None Found
4.23 Different distinctions for potential fathers (e.g., lesser/younger vs. major/older)
A father can be any brother of the genetic father, making them all have obligations “to give them shelter until they are in a position to provide for themselves and resume this office if and when they cease to be in such a position. Clothe the children and feed them and protect from ill treatment.”2 pg 132
4.24 Kin avoidance and respect?
You are not allowed to marry kin.
4.24 Joking relationships?
None Found
4.25 Patterns of descent (e.g., bilateral, matrilineal) for certain rights, names or associations
4.26 Incest avoidance rules “Marriage is exogamous; marriage to any person belonging to one's father's, mother's, father's mother's, and mother's clan is prohibited. If it happens, the ukudabula (literally, "cutting of the blood relationship") ritual is performed.” 1
4.27 Is there a formal marriage ceremony?
“Bride’s mother gives her daughter blanket that she will use to cover her body when she is leaving and her father will lead her to the kraal, and from the kraal they will go straight to the groom’s residence and the bride will be advised not to look back.
The bride’s family comes early in the morning so that the bride will steal the gate. The bride enters her husband's home while nobody is noticing her. She enters in the kitchen and seat in the women’s side of the house. Then the groom’s family will pay for not being aware of the bride, they should have stopped her before she enters the house. The groom’s family will welcome the bride’s family and show them the room in which they can stay. In the midday the ceremony will start both bride and groom wear their traditional clothes.” 4
4.28 In what way(s) does one get a name, change their name, and obtain another name?
“Babies are named before they are born in Zulu. There is no naming ceremony in the culture, but only a ceremony called imbeleko to introduce the baby to the ancestors and to thank them and ask them to protect it.” 5
4.29 Is marriage usually (or preferred to be) within community or outside community? (m/f difference?)
Incest is always discouraged, but marrying within the tribe is encouraged.
4.30 Are marriages arranged? Who arranges (e.g., parents, close kin)?
“The groom invites his in-laws to come to his home so that they will discuss the wedding date (Ukubona izinkomo). The groom pays all the cows to the bride’s family and then they set a date which is suitable for both families. After they agreed on a date the bride's family will go back home with the cows and start the wedding preparation.” 4
4.31 Evidence for conflict of interest over who marries who:
No particular evidence
Warfare/homicide
4.14 Percent adult (male) deaths due to warfare:
No percent is shown although the Zulu were at war frequently in the late 19th century.
4.15 Outgroup vs ingroup cause of violent death:
None Found
4.16 Reported causes of in-group and out-group killing:
None found
4.17 Number, diversity and relationship with neighboring societies (external relations):
Marrying into other families and tribes is accepted within Zulu culture.
4.18 Cannibalism?
None Found

5. Socio-Political organization and interaction
5.1 Mean local residential (village) group size:
“In the ecological setting already described the kraals of Makhanyaland are found, spread at first glance rather evenly and at random over the countryside. A kraal may consist of anything from one to a dozen huts. These are usually grouped in the form of a broken circle r crescent wit the horns pointing downhill and encircling a cattle byre; but sometimes, particularly with the smaller groupings, scattered in indefinite formation about the main hut. Huts vary in style from the small European-type house built of hollow concrete blocks with a corrugated iron roof through a rectangular wattle and daub variety and a rondavel form, down to the traditional Zulu hut.” 2 Pg 59
5.2 Mobility pattern: (seasonality):
None Found
5.3 Political system: (chiefs, clans etc, wealth or status classes):
“Makhanyaland is divided for political purposes into seven wards. The historical inception of these wards is obscure, for informants can only say that in Makutha’s time there was one ward this is the whole tribe, where as by Mtambo’s time there were six, whose boundaries with each of the present wards, was at that time not an independent ward. Wards are composed of a certain number of adjacent sub-wards, which are to some extent configurated in relation to the terrain. The fact that a ward consists of sub wards which are known to be dominant kinship units does not imply that the ward can be defined in kinship terms. Unlike the tribe, the individual ward has no absolute political unity of its own, for there is no agnaticaly or otherwise determined succession of political headship or control to give it such unity in time.” 2 Pg 242-243
“The Zulu have a monarch who commands respect from a large number of people who live under the immediate authority of their amakhosi ("chief’s"). Amakhosi pay respect to the king by attending the House of Traditional Leaders and mobilize support for festivities organized by the king. The "chief's" have subdivisions (izigodi) within the chiefdoms, which are looked after by headmen (izinduna). In some chiefdoms "chief's" have additional councilors who, together with headmen, form part of what is called the Tribal Authority, which helps the "chief govern. In addition, structures of the democratically elected local government administer access to facilities and services to all the people in KwaZulu-Natal Province. These structures work closely with the provincial government, and their relationship with the 'chief's' is a contentious issue.” 7
5.4 Post marital residence:
After a woman is married she moves into the kraal of her husbands family and is under the control of her mother in law. 2 pg 211
5.5 Territoriality? (Defined boundaries, active defense):
The Zulu’s territory is in KwaZulu Natal Province of South Africa
5.6 Social interaction divisions? (age and sex): “The puberty ceremony (umemulo) is a transition to full adulthood. Nowadays it is performed only for girls. It involves separation from other people for a period to mark the changing status from youth to adulthood. This is followed by "reincorporation," characterized by ritual killing of animals, dancing, and feasting. After the ceremony, the girl is declared ready for marriage. The courting days then begin. The girl may take the first step by sending a "love letter" to a young man who
appeals to her. Zulu love letters are made of beads. Different colors have different meanings, and certain combinations carry particular messages.”

5.7 Special friendships/joking relationships:
None Found

5.8 Village and house organization:
“The arrangement of huts within a kraal is distributed nowadays by the fact the modern rectangular house requires more careful sitting on level ground than did its rondavel predecessor. The low incidence of polygyny in modern times has also made precise division of the homestead as between wives unnecessary. A tendency now therefore exists to group kraal huts rather haphazardly about a relatively well sited main hut. The cattle kraal, if exists, is still usually built high, the lower ground must be the more proximate to the grazing areas and this prevents the beasts from having to be led in and out through the krall yard.”

5.9 Specialized village structures (mens’ houses):“Zulu in most of the rural areas do not have adequate basic services such as electricity, clean water, formal housing, transport, hospitals, or clinics. Urban Zulu live in the so-called black townships and the areas fringing industrial cities. Their living conditions are, at least, better than those in rural areas. They constitute the Zulu middle class; their lifestyle is usually no different from that of other Western urbanites. Since the education available in rural black schools is inferior, the people in these areas are not equipped to migrate and seek a better life in the urban areas. If they migrate, most end up in the poor areas fringing cities.”

5.10 Sleep in hammocks or on ground or elsewhere?
On ground

5.11 Social organization, clans, moieties, lineages, etc:
“The Zulu people always had a well-devised social structure, even before the missionaries arrived. The social structure is based on respect which is where their etiquette was adopted from. There were and still are clear rules defined regarding duties and manners for the entire household, starting from the lowliest of servants to the divine monarch. There were also precise rules regarding the behavior of women towards men, subordinates to their superiors and younger to elder.”

“The woman’s role is that of the subordinate one, they are inferior in status and value but that does not mean they are treated badly. She cooks, cleans, has babies and brings them up, cultivates the land and harvests, collects firewood, brews beer, fetches water if there are no children to do so, the list is endless but they are content with their lot. The men defend the family and land and take part in meetings to hear new laws and directives. All guests are received and entertained by the men, the men also put up enclosures and the basic structure of the hut, carves milking pails, spoons, plates, clubs and spears and if the need arises also fetches the traditional doctor.”

5.12 Trade:
Trade is found in Zulu tribe culture although it is not a main part of their income or food. If the do trade it is generally in vegetables or other crops due to the fertile land of Zululand.

5.13 Indications of social hierarchies?
“The Zulu people always had a well-devised social structure, even before the missionaries arrived. The social structure is based on respect which is where their etiquette was adopted from. There were and still are clear rules defined regarding duties and manners for the entire household, starting from the lowliest of servants to the divine monarch. There were also precise rules regarding the behavior of women towards men, subordinates to their superiors and younger to elder. Children learn to show respect to their parents and all elders from an early age (with the help of a good hiding as a 'tool of coercion' if necessary). It is the mother's sole duty to raise the children and teach them respect and their place within the family. Children quickly learn that entering the men's world is only allowed by invitation or when told to do so. All instructions given are carried out quickly and are received on one's knees, respectfully and silently.”

6. Ritual/Ceremony/Religion (RCR)

6.0 Time allocation to RCR:“The Zulu recognize the national holidays of the Republic of South Africa. In addition, they celebrate Shaka's Day every year in September. This holiday is marked by celebrations and slaughtering
cattle to commemorate the founder of the Zulu Kingdom. On this important day, Zulu people wear their full traditional attire (clothing and weapons) and gather at Shaka's tombstone, kwaDukuza in Stanger. This is a very colorful day attended by both national and international dignitaries who represent their governments. Izimbongi (praise-poets) sing the praises of all the Zulu kings, from Shaka to the present king, Zwelithini.” 1

“Soccer is very popular for both young boys and men. Children learn the game by watching their older brothers play. Whenever boys are together and not engaged in some household or school activity, they play soccer. Young boys, especially those who live next to big rivers, also compete in swimming. Girls, if they are not at school, are expected to assist their mothers in the house. However, they can play games once they have finished their chores. One popular game played by girls, especially in rural KwaZulu, is masishayana/maphakathi. Two girls stand opposite each other, usually not more than 165 feet (50 meters) apart. Another girl stands between them, facing the one who is holding a tennis ball. The idea of this game is to try to hit the girl standing in the middle while she tries to avoid being hit.” 1

6.1 Specialization (shamans and medicine):
“Zulu traditional medicines (or umuthi) have changed very little over the ages. The administrators of these traditions have various roles in the Zulu society. They are the inyanga or herbalist who is concerned with medicines made from plants and animals, the isangoma or witchdoctor who makes contact with the ancestral spirits and prescribes medicine according to their dictates and the isanusi who is a diviner capable of "smelling out" sorcerers and other evil-doers.” 6

6.2 Stimulants:
“Brewing of beer is the duty of the women. Coarse sorghum and maize is steeped in water for a day. On the second day, it is boiled and dry sorghum added and the mash allowed to cool. On the third day the brew is filtered through a sieve and served and consumed on the same day. It has an alcohol content of 3%, is refreshing and nutritious. The brewery is distinctive amongst the huts of the kraal in that it is only semi thatched, allowed the smoke from the fire to escape and ensuring a good supply of oxygen to the mash.” 6

6.3 Passage rituals (birth, death, puberty, seasonal):
“Ancestral spirits are important in Zulu religious life. Offerings and sacrifices are made to the ancestors for protection, good health, and happiness. Ancestral spirits come back to the world in the form of dreams, illnesses, and sometimes snakes. The Zulu also believe in the use of magic. Anything beyond their understanding, such as bad luck and illness, is considered to be sent by an angry spirit. When this happens, the help of a diviner (soothsayer) or herbalist is sought. He or she will communicate with the ancestors or use natural herbs and prayers to get rid of the problem. Many Zulu converted to Christianity under colonialism. Although there are many Christian converts, ancestral beliefs have far from disappeared. Instead, there has been a mixture of traditional beliefs and Christianity. This kind of religion is particularly common among urbanites. There are also fervent Christians who view ancestral belief as outdated and sinful.” 1

6.4 Other rituals:
None Found

6.5 Myths (Creation):
“Zulu mythology contains numerous deities, commonly associated with animals or general classes of natural phenomena. Unkulunkulu is the highest God and is the creator of humanity. Unkulunkulu ("the greatest one") was created in Uhlanga, a huge swamp of reeds, before he came to Earth. Unkulunkulu is sometimes conflated with the Sky Father Umvelinqangi (meaning "He who was in the very beginning"), god of thunder and earthquakes. Other deities include Mamlambo, a snake like the Lamia the goddess of rivers, and Nomkhumbulwane, sometimes called the Zulu Demeter, who is a goddess of the rainbow, agriculture, rain and beer (which she invented).” 3

6.6 Cultural material (art, music, games):
See 6.0

6.7 Sex differences in RCR:
There is a distinct difference between males and females when it comes to outside activities and sports. Boys are encouraged to play sports and be active where girls must finish chores before engaging in rest and relaxation as well as having different games to play.

6.8 Missionary effect:
“Many Zulu converted to Christianity under colonialism. Although there are many Christian converts, ancestral beliefs have far from disappeared. Instead, there has been a mixture of traditional beliefs and Christianity. This kind of religion is particularly common among urbanites. There are also fervent Christians who view ancestral belief as outdated and sinful.” 1

6.9 RCR revival:

6.10 Death and afterlife beliefs:
“Death is regarded as a time of tremendous loss. A death by illness is treated differently from a death by "a spill of blood." Accidents and death by murder are regarded as deaths by "a spill of blood," and medicinal healing is expected to accompany the funerals in these cases in order to stop such misfortune (ukuvala umkhokha). Generally, deaths are considered polluting, and various rituals and ceremonies must be observed to slowly remove the impurity. These rituals also serve to gradually send the deceased into the next world.” 7

6.11 Taboo of naming dead people?
None Found

6.12 Is there teknonymy?
None Found

6.13 Briefly describe religion (animism, ancestor worship, deism, magic, totems etc.)
“The Zulu religion is essentially household-based. It is characterized by an obligation by household heads to fulfill the necessary ceremonial rituals. These ceremonies often require the sacrifice of domestic animals (usually goats) and addressing the ancestors by burning impepho, an incense herb. There are African indigenous churches that combine aspects of Western Christianity with Zulu ways of communicating with ancestors. These churches have priests and healers who dedicate themselves to these practices for the benefit of the people who consult them. Diviners have traditionally existed among the Zulu and diagnose the causes of illnesses and misfortunes. The diagnosis often relates to dissatisfied ancestors or evil manipulation of umuthi for harmful effects (witchcraft).” 7

7. Adornment

7.1 Body paint:

7.2 Piercings:
Piercings are very common and part of a aging process. When a tribes member reaches a certain age they get the traditional piercings.

7.3 Haircut:

7.4 Scarification:

7.5 Adornment (beads, feathers, lip plates, etc.):

7.6 Ceremonial/Ritual adornment:
“Royal ceremonies include the reed dance ceremony (umkhosi womhlanga), in which young women show pride in their womanhood (with an emphasis on virginity) by parading at the king's palace in view of thousands of cheerful onlookers. The king maintains the traditional privilege of choosing a wife from among those women.” 7

7.7 Sex differences in adornment:
Women tend to wear dresses and brighter colors. Men wear furs and pelts while carrying spears and shield.

7.8 Missionary effect:

7.9 Cultural revival in adornment:
8. Kinship systems
8.1 Sibling classification system:
8.2 Sororate, levirate:
8.3 Other notable kinship typology, especially cross-cousin (MBD/FZD) typology (Crow/Hawaiian/Omaha etc.):

9. Other interesting cultural features (list them):
“For many people, the Zulu are the best-known African people. Their military exploits led to the rise of a great kingdom that was feared for a long time over much of the African continent. The Zulu are the descendants of Nguni-speaking people. Their written history can be traced back to the fourteenth century. In the early nineteenth century a young Zulu prince, Shaka, came onto the scene and welded most of the Nguni tribes into the powerful Zulu Kingdom. Shaka ruled from 1816 to 1828, when he was assassinated by his brothers. During his reign, Shaka recruited young men from all over the kingdom and trained them in his own novel warrior tactics. After defeating competing armies and assimilating their people, Shaka established his Zulu nation. Within twelve years, he had forged one of the mightiest empires the African continent has ever known. However, during the late 1800s, British troops invaded Zulu territory and divided the Zulu land into thirteen chiefdoms. The Zulu never regained their independence. Throughout the mid-1900s they were dominated by different white governments, first the British and later on, the Afrikaner. The Zulu have endeavored to regain a measure of political autonomy, both before South Africa's first democratic election in 1994 and in the subsequent period to the present. They have been unsuccessful, however, with both governments.”

Numbered references