

**SELECTED ANIMAL - AND BIRD -  
PROVERBS AS REFLECTORS OF INDIGENOUS  
KNOWLEDGE SYSTEMS AND SOCIAL MORES: A  
STUDY FROM ZULU LANGUAGE AND CULTURE**

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## DECLARATION

I **Ntandoni Gloria Biyela** hereby declare that, except the referenced citations, this is my original work.

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I declare that this thesis is ready for examination.

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Supervisor

March 2003

## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this work to our Lord Jesus Christ, the First Born of all Creation for enabling me to submit this thesis on my 50<sup>th</sup> birthday and my 22<sup>nd</sup> anniversary of my religious life; the late B.W. Vilakazi and C.L.S. Nyembezi who have been my inspiration in the field of research, as well as the conservation of Zulu oral literature. This research is also dedicated to the personnel of Wildlife who devote their time for the conservation of nature, animals and birds.

The tragic death of my beloved father, Jacob, Mphathiseni Mahudula Biyela had a negative impact on the submission of this thesis. May he too together with my late mother, Cathrine MaMdunge Biyela enjoy a share in this dedication for educating me, my brother and my sisters. MaKhanyile Mdunge, my grandmother may you enjoy a larger share of this thesis.

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## ABSTRACT

*Selected animal- and bird- proverbs as reflectors of Indigenous Knowledge Systems and social mores: a study from Zulu language and culture* is a research that focuses on the human-animal and bird interface to explore the role animals and birds play in the manifestation of a composite picture of Zulu society. This research also proposes to investigate various concepts related to animal and bird metaphors as manifested in the images of proverbial metaphors with an objective of examining the philosophical thought, moral values and attitudes of Zulu society.

The primary objective of this research is to contribute to an understanding of the ways in which humans use animal and bird behaviour in constructing healthy social relationships as well as meaningful social coexistence.

This research is conceptually based on the nature of language as a symbolic representation of reality. It attempts to do a critical interpretation of images reflected in proverbial metaphors with the help of international theories which might be applicable to a Zulu situation as well as oral testimonies of local informants as the research is based on local concepts.

Language is the expression of human communication through which knowledge, belief, and behaviour can be experienced, explained and shared. This makes language the most efficient means of transmitting culture, and it is the owners of that culture that lose the most when a language dies. Every culture has adapted to unique circumstances, and the language expresses those circumstances.

Identity is closely associated with language. What we talk about, think, and believe is closely bound up with the words and symbols we have, so the history of a culture can be traced in its language which is a major form of human communication and interaction.

Recognition of Indigenous Knowledge Systems is being encouraged in most parts of the world as it enriches and enhances indigenous peoples' self esteem. In Africa for instance,

the recognition of indigenous peoples together with their Indigenous Knowledge Systems seems to have given rise to a concept called 'African Renaissance' which implies the renewal or the regeneration of the African continent.

Indigenous Knowledge Systems are vital in teaching us different ways of thinking about life, of approaching our day-to-day existence on the environment. Recognising and developing these traditional knowledge systems might help indigenous peoples all over the world preserve their traditional knowledge about the environment as well as their cultural identities of which language is a major component. Language and human identity are inherently linked and inseparable. For many people, like the Zulu, the loss of language may bring loss of identity, dignity, sense of community and traditional religion or spirituality,

When language is lost, people of that particular language also lose the knowledge contained in that language's words, symbols, grammar and expressive elements such as proverbial metaphors and indigenous aphorisms that can never be recovered if the language has not been studied or recorded.

Selected animal and bird species form the basis of this research on account of their direct link on Zulu people's culture, indigenous medicine and language reflected through proverbs and idioms. For example, images of the big four of the wild which are: the lion, leopard, buffalo and elephant, and are commonly known as the favourites of the Zulu royal house are used in the presentation of the symbolic figure of King Shaka.

A society is formed by a common culture and language, and is moulded by acceptance of rules, customs, ways of life and moral responsibility that promote ideas and ideals that secure the survival of society.

The understanding of such a background context about a society helps for a better analysis of its literature, particularly proverbs. Proverbs are the most valuable source for the understanding of a society because they are the reflection of a society from which they originate. Proverbs, as the product of an entire society, need to be studied in society and society through them.

Proverbs are concerned with people's behaviour and attitudes as they relate to the treatment of persons through the use of moral principles and by giving a device for providing guidance for people's lives. Proverbs are also an oral thread that permeates throughout both tradition and culture in order to manifest the golden heritage invested in these genres. They also serve as a code for establishing standard in ethical and moral behaviour. Ethical behaviour is a normative principle that ensures ease of life lived in common as it acknowledges both the rights and the responsibilities of every citizen in promoting individual and societal well-being.

There are several proverbs directed primarily at instilling basic values of honesty, sharing, gratitude and respect to children. Adult members of society seem to have a binding duty of instilling good habits of behaviour, guidelines and boundaries in life towards self-discipline to the young generation and this prepares them to be responsible and considerate citizens in future. Communal responsibility in raising children is an African practice.

A framework against which to examine the social manifestations of the phenomenon of food and eating together in Zulu proverbs is set out. Eating is one of the most basic of our human activities. Either we eat, or we die. Because food is so basic to life, it also takes on a rich symbolic importance. Different societies have developed rituals around food and it plays a prominent role in various different religions.

We do not simply eat to satisfy a physical need to stay alive. Our eating together of meals goes beyond our physical actions. Food enriches our enjoyment of life and is central to the development of any human culture and social relationships.



Responsible behaviour is the epitome of this research. The Zulu place a high value on responsible behaviour in building an individual's reputation. Responsible behaviour makes social relationships healthy and successful in a holistic manner.

The goal of this research is to assist in the development of moral, compassionate and fair-minded persons who can make positive contributions to society as individuals and as members of society who honour good conduct as an intrinsic value. Every society desires individuals whose actions reflect their integrity and a deep sense of social responsibility.

Chronically irresponsible individuals who are inconsiderate seem to become targets of proverbs. Several proverbs referring to animals and birds admonish irresponsible behaviour. For instance, an image of a dog is often used to characterise deceitful and irresponsible behaviour while an image of a bird figures in several proverbs that implicate interpersonal decorum.

Social life in Zulu culture is based on reciprocal or communal sharing, principles dealing with proper disposition of valuables such as ritualised meat and food. Several of the corpora of this study give guidelines and etiquette of sharing such food. Rituals to link the living community with the community of the dead reflect the inextricable bond between the two communities.

Proverbs are therefore, considered an essential catalyst or a common vehicle through which a society can renew and reinforce its values, and restore a sense of pride, dignity and respect amongst its members as they stress the task of nation building in the context of joint action towards the eradication of antisocial practices which do not promote sustainable social relationships as well as survival of society.

This research concentrates on the regeneration and re-norming of society through the formulation, propagation and restoration of values reflected by selected animal and bird proverbs. Facilitating the realisation of the moral society through the regeneration of moral values is possible through the realisation of the essence of responsible behaviour in the minds and hearts of people.

This means that reconstructing an environment permeated by a regenerated ethical behaviour which encapsulates credibility, respectability, responsibility, loyalty, co-operation and communal sharing of values provides a paradigm shift to give society a new direction towards a communal dedication to helping each other do our best.

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## Chapter 1

### THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

#### Introductory perspective

This introductory chapter is intended to place the whole research in perspective by presenting a few basic concepts on Zulu proverbs referring to selected animals and birds as metaphors and other oral indigenous aphorisms which reflect a variety of moral lessons in Zulu culture, and are used to re-inforce moral beliefs.

Animal and bird behaviour is the 'subject' of Zulu proverbial lore. Language is both an expression and a symbolic representation of meaning. Oral cultures strive to create new facets of such meaning by the use of metaphors based on natural phenomena, the great book available to any intelligent observer. The animal world, being so close and almost parallel to the human one, constitutes the ideal ground for the formulation of metaphors, which make use of both animal and bird symbols in order to highlight the human reality.

“Animals are good to think. They provide human beings everywhere with a rich set of possibilities for constructing meaning, and for commenting about the nature of social life.” (Levi-Strauss in Alan Howard and Jan Rensel, 1991:18)

The objective referent namely: animals, birds and their perceived social behaviour is there for all to see, but the use one makes of it, or the sense one derives from it, depends to a great extent on the cultural background of the group, which acts as a filter for the interpretation of nature. Many proverbs selected for this study also arise from the observation of animal and bird social behaviour, which is in turn interpreted according to the socio-cultural traditions of the Zulu people. Proverbs are often considered as witty codifications of a group's philosophy of life expressed in a simple and non-systematic fashion.

“Proverbs offer practical advice, both spiritual and physical, in our daily life...Proverbs are challenging, have a listening attitude and welcome

counselling from every corner in life.” (Ishengoma in African Proverb of the Month, 2000:32)

A proverb is also defined as a succinct and memorable statement that contains advice, a warning or prediction or analytical observation. By researching the meanings attached by our elders to proverbs that are based on animals and birds’ social behaviour, one should be able to decipher some aspects of the metaphors that constitute the common heritage of the Zulu language and shape cultural attitudes that reflect the Zulu social system. There exists some literature on the relationship of Africans with the animal world, as revealed in folklore, taken as the oral expression of culture, life and attitudes.

In recent years scholars such as Beidelman (1961; 1975; 1980), Canonici (1995; 1996), Gcumisa (1992), to mention just a few, have investigated the bases of African and Zulu folkloristic trends as resulting from the physical characteristics of various animals, either real or perceived.

### 1.1 **Scope of the study**

This study sets out to identify the perceived terms of the linguistic and symbolic metaphors or the underlying symbolic system within the language in order to decipher the deep meaning of the proverbs under consideration. The other pole of my research is African/Zulu traditional social life. Since proverbs were taken as life directives, expressing the wisdom of the ancient generations, it is important to understand what kind of socio-cultural context, religious and ethical worlds they reflect.

The study is primarily concerned with the norms of human behaviour with the ultimate good of society as a whole. This means that it is concerned with what humans ought to do which propounds the supreme good of human life and which formulates the right and wrong and good and evil. However, it is not so much concerned about how human behaviour actually occurs or has occurred.

The focus is specifically on the principles or rules which make human conduct right or moral according to customs, usages or habits of Zulu society. This study also sets out to explore the values attached to good moral behaviour and the duties of the entire community in fostering controlled behaviour among the members of society young and old by presenting an extensive examination of the moral nature of humans rooted in moral obligations of the responsible behaviour and its key role in constituting society and sustainable social relationships. Ethical behaviour is proposed as an element in the creation of moral community, in general. This study presents a novel framework for understanding the elements in society's ethical responsibility. Philosophical and cultural works rest on the assumption that norms shape behaviour. The way people act often reflects what they think and believe.

The purpose of my present research is, however, restricted to: a collection of oral testimony and study of Zulu proverbs referring to selected animals and birds as well as indigenous aphorisms, viewed as reflections and symbols of Zulu social attitudes. This research concentrates on the manifestations of the phenomenon of animal and bird metaphors reflected in Zulu proverbs. This research is also based on the analysis and interpretation of images in these metaphors and the analytical method focuses on the principle that proverbs are part of the oral communication system, which is culture bound. Many scholars of Zulu literature have demonstrated the dynamic and enduring legacy of oral traditions through folktale metaphors. Animals and birds are the most popular characters used in the folklore tradition. However, in spite of their popularity in this field of study, there is not a considerable amount of field- research done on the study of proverbs, based on animal and bird observation, which is then transferred to the sphere of human behaviour. Most of the work done on proverbs is classroom or library- based. This research is therefore an attempt to fill this gap by involving local informants to participate in the interpretation of the selected proverbs, as these proverbs are part of their own language. Their contribution might shed invaluable insight for the present research because proverbs are the wisdom of many. "A proverb ... belongs to many people." (Taylor in Mieder and Dundes, 1981:3)

## 1.2 Methodology: Anticipation methods and direction of investigation

The research consists of two inter-related stages. The first stage involves a detailed study of written material referring to oral traditions in general and to proverbs in particular. Some of the sources identified are unpublished. The second stage: as mentioned above, the primary sources of information for the present research will be the local informants.

The second stage involves field research where oral information will be elicited from various persons who are considered as expert practitioners of oral literature and traditions. These include: *izimbongi* (bards) who describe the physical and dispositional characteristics of the kings through bold imagery used in animal metaphor; elderly shepherds, who live in contact with nature and are able to explain animal and bird lore; Zulu rangers at some game reserves (for example, uMfolozi Game Reserve) because they too are rich in animal lore which they acquire daily through observation of animal behaviour; and are able to offer fresh insights into a number of proverbs; and *izinyanga* (herbalists) who are often guided in the choice of animal substances for their traditional medicines by well known proverbs.

I intend to contextualise the discussion on proverbs by returning to the communities where these proverbs are still fondly and intelligently utilised in daily conversation. During my previous field research, I discussed a number of proverbs with the informants and I find it necessary to return to those informants for further investigation. I hope that this information, properly recorded and organized, will be of great value for further academic research.

## 1.3 Tradition and testimony

It is necessary to explain the meaning of 'tradition' and 'testimony' as these two terms are extensively employed in the study and the majority of the proverbs selected for this study are also based on tradition where oral testimony is used as a vehicle for the better understanding of the images reflected in metaphor. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary* (1990:799), tradition is an opinion or belief or custom handed down from one

generation to another especially orally; while testimony (page 778) is explained as an oral or written statement or evidence. Vansina in Biyela (1998:7) states:

“Eyewitness accounts, even when given orally, do not come within the sphere of tradition because they are not reported statements. Oral tradition exclusively consists of hearsay accounts, that is testimonies that narrate an event which has not been witnessed and remembered by the informant himself, but which he has learnt about through hearsay. There are three types of oral testimony: the eyewitness account, oral tradition and rumour.”

The testimonies collected for this study are not eyewitness accounts, but hearsay testimonies.

“From a formal point of view, it is possible to distinguish between two types of traditions: Those which have a fixed form and are learnt by heart and transmitted as they stand, and those which are free in form and not learnt by heart and which everyone transmits in his own way.” (Vansina, 1965:22)

According to Vansina’s distinction, *izaga* (proverbs) would be in the category of fixed tradition as they are usually transmitted as they stand, although one comes across regional or modern variations. Free form traditions in Zulu are folktales and legends. Vansina further identifies another type of tradition which he calls ‘esoteric’, that is, a tradition which is known and transmitted only by certain ranks of the population. Among the Zulu, bards’, herbalists’ and diviners’ knowledge can be considered as ‘esoteric’, as it is often kept secret within the profession.

#### 1.4 Characteristics of metaphors

“Metaphor is a term from rhetoric that refers to a figure of speech or linguistic device in which a word or phrase that literally denotes one thing is used figuratively for something else, as a way of suggesting likeness or analogy between the two. As such the metaphor conveys additional or more complex meaning beyond the literal meaning, often in a subtle way; it can be a way of ‘expressing the inexpressible’ or ‘saying the unsayable’.  
{Handout, for LNG 057 2000:1}



Proverbial metaphors are deeply embedded in our thoughts, language and culture. As a result, they affect how we experience the world and interact with people around us. Moon (1997:5) states:

“Metaphorical proverbs certainly provide a more interesting field for analysis. Metaphorical proverbs take a familiar scene and turn it into a metaphor which not only conveys a message, but does so in a way that is both vivid and memorable. Metaphorical proverbs can come to mean much more than the sum of words from which they are comprised.”

Metaphors are also artistic expressions of the human associative faculty whereby one thing is made to stand for another. They are used to engage the listener’s mind by making the subject of discussion more vivid and memorable through emotive images. According to Lakoff (1997:1) the metaphor is conceptual; it is not in the words themselves, but in the mental images.

Zulu proverbs make abundant use of animal and bird metaphors, drawn from the general imagery and symbolic stock on the basis of their suitability for specific situations and socio-cultural context. The ability to abstract and to associate concepts and ideas renders possible the establishment of an imagery bank, expressed in animal metaphor images and known to a whole community, from which every member of the group may draw both his inspiration and the means for effective communication. Canonici (1995:13) explains how and why human societies use animal metaphors for their own social relationships:

“The use of animal metaphors is a generalizing and distancing technique widely recognized in literatures from many parts of the world. Generalization occurs because animal characters are used as stereotypes of behaviour, feelings, attitudes, etc. that can be in human behaviour in general, without pointing a finger at anybody in particular. Distancing results from a seemingly objective vision of the animal world, which may or may not be applicable to the human condition. Thus, while the signifier is animal behaviour, the signified is the human condition, and more specifically the society in which the proverb is used.”

The metaphor is after all the expression of relativity. It subjects one thing to the light of another. Everything real or unreal, conjures up metaphors.

#### 1.4.1 Interpretation of images in metaphors

Interpretation of images for the revelation of meaning in the metaphors is one of the key aspects in this study as it proposes to investigate various concepts related to animal and bird metaphors as manifested in the images, in the fascinating oral genre, namely proverbs. However, decoding the meaning carried by an image reflected in the metaphor cannot be carried out in a vacuum. It needs a critical examination of both the renowned international theories on study of proverbs, which might be applicable to a Zulu situation, as well as the oral testimonies of the local informants, as the study is based on local concepts. The combination of these sources is based on the fact that proverbs have to be interpreted at various levels. Honeck (1980:129) states:

“The basic property of proverbs is that they can be understood on both a literal and a figurative level. All the other properties depend upon this fact.”

At the surface level or literal level, the situations, the matter, and the image can be understood by most people, but at the deep structure level or figurative level, a person needs the help of a decoding key to understand all the nuances of the message being conveyed because social and cultural objects or images are carriers of conventional meaning. Vansina in Biyela [op.cit:8] states:

“The meaning of a word only becomes intelligible when the total context in which it has been uttered is taken into account. One has to be thoroughly acquainted with the society in question. Key words which express cultural values are untranslatable, except by lengthy descriptive expression, because there are no equivalent meanings.”

Both the animal and bird proverbs selected for this study are also made up of certain key words that often describe action, behaviour and attitude whose implications are based on the socio-cultural context, beliefs and the implications found in the Zulu language and in the light of social practices. These key words often become a big problem to a cultural

outsider or a person who grew up in an urban area because they are culture-bound, which means that a person seeking to understand their implications should be familiar with the Zulu cultural traditions and social practices. For example, it is not a strange thing in the African villages to see a Zulu gnawing a bone or crushing it on a stone to enjoy its marrow in public. Some of my colleagues from other cultures also regard eating the entrails of a beast as something most disgusting. For an African, a Zulu in particular, this is the most delicious 'dish'.

It does not mean that everyone who speaks a particular language is an expert in that language. Here, the emphasis is on the knowledge of the ethics of conduct in the light of a socio-cultural context of society concerned, which helps in the identification of what is ethical and unethical according to its world- view.

“The cultural system establishes the pattern according to which the other systems function... It takes the pattern precepts of the cultural system, converts them into practical rules and norms and so regulates society as a harmonious whole” (De Klerk, et al 1990:8)

### **1.5 Field research: Target places**

As I have done for my M.A. research, I have made several trips to rural places to collect oral testimony and to record interviews on audio and video tapes for serious examination at home. The main target places were: Mahlabathini, Nongoma, Nkandla, KwaDukuza and Mandeni, where traditional culture is known to be still thriving. Although Umlazi location is an urban area, it was also visited, as there are still elderly people with valuable knowledge regarding Zulu proverbs. In Umlazi there were also educators whom I wanted to interview, as the teaching of proverbs is part of their curriculum.

Historical places as well as names of individuals whose descendants still living are reflected in several proverbs. It was felt that it would be a great achievement to see those places, to get a feeling of the realities around which these proverbs originated and to interview the descendants of the individuals mentioned in them.

Although proverbs are so popular in Zulu society it is not known who the creators of a large number of them are and where they lived. Nevertheless, there are a few which are claimed to have originated with certain individuals such as King Shaka, Mpande and Dingane as it will be seen in the forth-coming pages.

#### **1.6 Selection of informants: the age problem**

One of the reasons for not getting the exact age of my informants is that the majority of them are illiterate. They used to estimate their age by using major historical events. For example, an elderly informant would tell me that he or she was born during the year in which King Solomon died. It was up to me to estimate the age of that particular individual.

Experience has also shown me that informants become more comfortable during the interview if the researcher does not ask questions which concern their personal life. I remember interviewing MaVilakazi, the wife of King Solomon and, how difficult it was to inquire about her age in the presence of her servants. According to Zulu custom that would have been very impolite to do that to a queen.

Although I have a sketchy age estimation of some of my informants it is rather impractical to give this estimation in every chapter where their testimony is used for analysis. Instead, an estimated age average is given now in this introduction only. With an exception of a few informants who were above 90 years of age and the youth whose ages were in the twenties, the average age estimation of my informants ranged from 40 to 85.

##### **1.6.1 Informants selected as a basis for reference**

It was quite impossible to deal with all the oral testimonies thus collected in a study of this nature. To avoid finding myself in a jungle of relevant and irrelevant information, I decided to deal with a limited number of topics and issues. My second task was to identify knowledgeable people who could shed some light on the interpretation of these images according to the Zulu socio-cultural context. Some points of information are supplied by some informants only. In such cases special attention will be given to them. I hope this

method will have some advantage for comparative analysis and critical examination of each testimony. Other informants will be presented when their testimonies are introduced.

For practical reasons I have decided to select certain informants as a basis for reference. Outstanding amongst them, for their wide knowledge of social behaviour of both animals and birds are: (a) Bheki Njoko, Reggie Khumalo and Victor Khumalo are in the group of individuals because their testimonies are analysed separately. (b) *Izimbongi* (bards) such as Buzetsheni M. Mdletshe and Ntulizempi John Dlamini form the group of the royal traditionalists. c) The third group is made of *izinyanga* (herbalists) such as Zizwezonke Mthethwa, Zihlahlazemithi Cele and W.W. Mabuya.

Each group is briefly presented in this introduction.

#### 1.6.2 Individual informants

##### a) Bheki Njoko:

Bheki Njoko is a young ranger who was born at Howick in KwaZulu- Natal. At present he is working at UMfolozi Game Reserve. His knowledge about the social behaviour of wild animals is overwhelming. During an interview I could feel that animals such as the buffalo, the male leopard and the ratel fascinated him most. He shared unique information which will be analysed in the forthcoming discussions about the social behaviour of these animals which showed that he has studied them closely with great interest.

The issue of endangered species worries me greatly because it shows that some of the wild animals which have enriched our Zulu language through their exotic behaviour might soon be no more for us to admire as metaphoric referents that abound in our proverbs. For a long time, I have been longing to make a contribution towards projects which run awareness campaigns on conservation of wildlife.

A thought of visiting a game reserve was motivated by TV programmes such as 50/50, Wildlife Specials and National Geographical Specials which show a great concern for the well-being of animals especially those that are known as endangered species. These programmes seem to run an awareness project to make people aware how important both birds and animals are for the sustainability of our environment. Such awareness goes a long way if we take into consideration that Zulu Language is made of many proverbs based on natural environment, especially both animals and birds. This means that conservation of wild species can provide a sustainable resource for Zulu oral literature, language, culture and research.

b) Reggie Khumalo:

Reggie Khumalo is from the house of Mzilikazi of Mashobana. He was born at Nongoma, and he now lives in the Mahlabathini district. He is renowned for his invaluable knowledge of Zulu customs, beliefs and etiquette. In the radio station, Ukhozi FM, he specifically deals with Zulu traditions as well as African Religion. He has been recently assigned a task of researching about Shaka's homestead called KwaKhangelani amaNkengane which was built at the place which is today known as Congela along Umbilo Road. Reggie's informants claim that a pool in the park on the eastern side of Umbilo Road near King Edward Hospital stands almost at the same place where Shaka's water was fetched.

c) Victor Khumalo:

Victor Khumalo is a middle-aged man who works at Prince Mshiyeni Hospital in Umlazi. He grew up herding cattle and hunting both birds and animals. He admires animals but elephants appeared to be his top favourites. He had many stories to tell about their social behaviour. It was amazing to learn that elephants are right- or left-tusked. Khumalo explained that the tusk that the elephant favours most usually hangs lower than the other. It also becomes shorter and more worn out than the other due to constant use. Khumalo mentioned that he admired elephants for their remarkable intelligence as well as their

affection towards each other. According to Khumalo elephants are not aggressive if they are not provoked.

### 1.6.3 *Izimbongi* (The bards)

Buzetsheni M. Mdletshe and Ntulizempi John Dlamini

Both Buzetsheni M. Mdletshe and Ntulizempi John Dlamini are the most popular bards of the present king, Goodwill Zwelithini. Buzetsheni M. Mdletshe lives at KwaCeza and works at the king's offices at KwaNongoma. It was Mdletshe who recommended and introduced Dlamini to me whom I first met at the king's offices at Nongoma. Dlamini was also the bard of King Cyprian who is father of the present king. The praises of both King Cyprian and Zwelithini are his own creation. He has the most amazing talent of creating, proclaiming and interpreting every word in the praises of almost all the Zulu kings, even those which are not part of his own production.

### 1.6.4 **The bards as messengers of peace**

The first thing I asked Dlamini during the interview was why he had to proclaim the king's praises before he entered the main gate because he was not coming to see him and he did not know whether he was there or not. He answered with the following proverb: *isi' asithintwa*. (a leopard is never touched) According to Dlamini touching in this proverb implies provocation.

He explained that this proverb originates from the behaviour of the leopard. As the leopard is a solitary animal it seldom fights. It is very rare to hear that a human has been attacked by a leopard. If the leopard sees a human being in its territory who has no intentions to harm it, it does not attack that person. According to Dlamini a leopard is a gracious and a peaceful animal. But when it is 'touched' death is inevitable.

Dlamini explained that according to Zulu custom he as the *imbongi* had to sing the king's praises to show him respect and to inform him that he had come on a peaceful endeavour. Without the proclamation of the praises the king could have been suspicious of his arrival. The king might have thought he had come with enemies to harm him which could be interpreted as declaring war on the 'Zulu leopard'. In other words the singing of the praises is a sign of peace. Dlamini also mentioned that there are times where the king is totally unapproachable. During such situations people usually run to the bards to ask them to sing praises of the king's ancestors. The praises pacify him. Dlamini also mentioned that there are people who have been 'saved' from the king's wrath by the praises because when they are proclaimed he has to pay heed to them because they represent his predecessor kings whom he has to respect. While he is listening, his wrath also cools down. This is what people believe.

### 1.7 *Izinyanga* (The herbalists)

#### a) Zizwezonke Mthethwa:

Zizwezonke Mthethwa lives at eNgudwini near Mandeni. He is a well-known traditionalist, diviner and herbalist, often consulted by researchers. He has a consistent knowledge about tradition and about proverbs. During an interview he had a tendency of interpreting animal images reflected in proverbs together with those used by bards in *izibongo* with an aim of showing a relationship between the animal images reflected in both genres, as these images in both genres are used for one objective, that is to illustrate a better picture of the Zulu socio-cultural context.

#### b) Zihlahlazemithi Cele:

Zihlahlazemithi Cele is a renowned herbalist. His home is at Ngonyameni and he works as a full-time herbalist at his chemist at Umlazi. He is a very informative herbalist. I was very much impressed when I saw him being interviewed on TV after my visit to him.



c) W.W. Mabuya:

W.W. Mabuya lives at Mgababa. He also has been interviewed by several researchers who have written books about his work. During an interview his wife, who is a diviner, was of great help. To help me get a variety of interpretations of animal images which were under discussion, she decided to introduce Zenzele Myeza, one of their assistants to help in the interpretation. Myeza's information combined with that of the Mabuya family shed most valuable insight concerning the social behaviour of animal and the use of their parts in traditional healing.

#### 1.7.1 The herbalists and the use of *izinyamazane* (a healing mixture made of animal parts)

The herbalists use *izinyamazane* for healing their patients. According to David Holt-Biddle (1997), over 80% of the black population in KwaZulu-Natal uses indigenous medicine whose primary ingredients are indigenous plants and animal parts known as *izinyamazane*. It is believed that their contribution will be of great help in the analysis of images conveyed through animal and bird metaphors used in proverbs.

There are several proverbs which refer to the use of *izinyamazane*. For example, *aziphelelanga zonke: kwasala uchakide nonogwaja*. (not all animals have been used in the preparation of the concoction to strengthen the newly born baby: the mongoose and the hare were left out) This proverb refers to a custom of strengthening a baby with magic concoctions, containing many animals mixed together to ensure that the child will grow up with the qualities connected by tradition with such animals. This proverb is used to describe a foolish person who does not show any qualities of wisdom. It also alludes to the fact that Zulu society see a person who lacks wisdom and intelligence as the most unfortunate being because he or she is missing the most invaluable characteristics that every human being would aspire to have. It can be said that because Chakide and Nogwaja are known for their cunning, wisdom etc., they are referred to in the proverb.

Still on the point of strengthening the infants with the animal parts it is good to talk about the parts of a ratel or honey badger which the herbalists are often reluctant to use.

### 1.7.2 *Insele* (A ratel or a honey badger)

The two following idioms might shed some light on why the herbalists are often discouraged from using the ratel's parts in their traditional mixtures.

The first idiom says: *yinsele kaLindamkhonto*. (It is the ratel of Mr Await- the- spear) which literally means that it is a kind of a ratel that waits for the spear like that of Lindamkhonto) It is said that there was a man who used to fight with a ratel with a hope of overcoming it. When he found out that his opponent, the ratel, became more aggressive, he would then go to his house to fetch his spear to kill it. Amazingly, when this man returned he would find the reckless daring and foolhardy ratel waiting for him to continue a fight at the same place where he left it.

This idiom is used to describe a very obstinate person. Simply speaking, this idiom tells us that a ratel is not a weak opponent. It never backs off. I am reminded of the testimony of Bheki Njoko, a ranger, who mentioned that a ratel never moves away from the path even for humans. Instead, it roars furiously which implies that it is expecting that particular individual to turn back. According to Njoko it is unlike a leopard that often turns away when it sees that someone coming is not a threat to its life. It appears that a leopard has qualities of courtesy and grace which are lacking in a small animal such as the ratel. Let us consider this proverb concerning the ratel's behaviour. *Zimbiwe yinsele*. (They [honeycombs] have been scooped by the honey badger.)

The informants mentioned that the honey badger has a habit of scooping a large amount of honey-combs and then leaves them lying on a rock near the bee nest to dry up. It is said that it enjoys eating them when they are dry. Human beings have also a habit of stealing these honey-combs with the hope that the owner is not around. It is also said that many people have died from stealing the ratel's honey-combs because the honey badger usually arrives

right on time when these people enjoy its honey- combs. Since life in the wild is harsh and food reserves are scarce it appears that the honey badger is always prepared to fight for survival, and be on the alert because many others are after the same commodity. The informants have strong assumptions that this idiom about the honey badger originated as a warning to discourage people from stealing the honey combs of this ferocious animal which is said to have the strength of a lion.

“Legends abound about the ratel’s instinct to go for the groin when attacking. It is said to rush in with tail held high and, with an angry, rattling roar, rip out the testicles of any threatening male animal (whether human, lion or buffalo). There may be a basis for the legends, as adult male buffalo, wildebeest and waterbuck have died from loss of blood after being attacked by a ratel. {African Wildlife Foundation, 2000:2}

It appears that the actions of a ratel are driven by two powerful forces, that is anger against real or perceived enemies and desire to fight against any opponent. These two drives are considered culturally undesirable because they are based on immoral anger which is geared towards reckless destruction and annihilation. Due to its extreme ferocity it appears that its qualities are not appropriate for a young person that is still encouraged to develop tolerance for one another. It is assumed that the herbalists are discouraged from using the parts of this animal because they might have negative effects on the infants. Parents might fail to discipline their children who could be as foolhardy as the ratel. Eventually, this might give rise to a violent young generation who, driven by anger and emotional stress, might act irresponsibly.

The testimony of the herbalists shows that knowledge of the socio-cultural context is essential for a proper analysis of folklore, particularly proverbs. Proverbs reflect what the speaker perceives to be true and for which they have evidence in the form of the conventional wisdom which they represent. The truth value of a proposition expressed in a proverb depends on the speaker’s topic and purpose rather than on its inherent truth. For this reason it is necessary to refer to the context of their utterance to gauge adherence to the maxims of quality. The listener’s identification of a proverb is a two-fold process involving first the abstract notion of a proverb as it is culturally or ethnically conceived, and means of assigning individual utterances to that.

The use of proverbial metaphors based on both animals and birds which the Zulu also use for medicinal purposes seems to form a very significant thread which links Zulu traditional medicines with the Zulu language as well as oral literature.

### 1.8 The importance of home-based oral knowledge

Koopman in Kaschula (2001:153) states:

“ I am informed by my colleagues in the Zulu Department at the University ... that until relatively recently children of school-going age were drilled in Zulu oral poetry in the school environment and were encouraged to memorise stretches of various *izibongo zamakhosi*. I understand that this practice, fallen into disuse during the seventies and eighties, is now being revived in the KwaZulu-Natal schools. The importance of this educational involvement in *izibongo* in maintaining ‘formula-awareness’ is obvious.”

This statement indicates that something has gone missing in the teaching of poetry in KwaZulu schools. Probably, educators did not see the need of drilling learners on oral literature as a means to activate their memory through formula-awareness as the learners had text books, computers and calculators to use as references whenever they needed information. It might happen that educators did not even realise the point that encouraging learners to engage in oral tradition is one of the vital instruments to motivate learners to become eloquent speakers, historians, or successful artists on the stage, because through drilling in oral art learners develop skills in presentation, confidence and self-esteem.

One of the reasons that could have caused the neglect of oral tradition, particularly *izibongo* in KwaZulu-Natal schools is that literacy has been promoted at the expense of oral tradition because language study in recent decades has focused on written texts. The constant reliance on only what is written has eventually resulted in a divorce of the two cultures. Such is the divorce or closure that Ong (1982) long feared with the introduction of writing. Oral tradition has suffered the consequences because oral tradition has been looked down upon instead of

taking both cultures as equal partners. Makgamatha in Sienaert (1998:112) sees both oral culture and literacy being equally important in the present context in the education system:

“With the electronic revolution that we are going through in Southern Africa, performance studies of art in general and folklore in particular are now more than ever before, not only possible but necessary... It is through performance studies that we can show the relationship between the text of a particular story and its specific performance.”

Nowadays most Zulu children live in nuclear families where there are no grand-parents to teach them in the oral tradition. Growing in an extended family automatically creates a wider audience where children motivate each other to take part in the performance of an oral work. In the past some basic folklore such as folktales about the mongoose, a character which is very popular amongst the children as well as riddles about animals were learnt a long time before the school-going age. It should be remembered that the majority of Zulu children used to attend school at about the age of ten or above a few decades ago. They had to grow up until this age because schools were far away from their homes. This gave them more time to learn folklore. When they started school, they had already accumulated a huge amount of folklore which they could share with others when they started school.

The mention of school-going age does not necessarily mean that Zulu children were taught folklore in preparation for the school. The teaching of folklore is a tradition which started long before the introduction of the present system of education. It can be said that the evening ‘classes’ during which a grandmother taught folklore were also preparing Zulu children for a certain kind of learning that involved a more developed system of acquiring oral knowledge. In the present context these Zulu evening classes conducted by a grandparent or an adult seem to work almost the same way as creches or preparatory schools. All these systems seem to have one thing in common which is giving orientation to a child as far as education is concerned, and regardless of the kind of institution the child might attend in future. Such

orientation gives basics or fundamentals to knowledge either from oral culture or literate system.

Following are a few examples which I have selected to highlight the importance of the contribution by grand-parents in our community and adult family members in the performance and preservation of oral art.

Ong [op.cit.:2] states:

“ Human society first formed itself with the aid of oral speech, becoming literate very late in its history.”

Ong reminds me of my grandmother who despite her illiterate condition taught us oral tradition which as a child I never thought would be part and parcel of my school life up to the tertiary level.

My grandmother had a trick unique to herself. When we asked her to narrate a folktale she would not refuse but she would first lay conditions. She would tell us that she would narrate the folktale if we showed her how many names of animals and birds we knew. She would then tell us to play the following games:

#### 1.8.1 Learning both animal and birds' names as a game

##### a) The rules of the game

This game is played in pairs. The participants take turns. *Phansi* (down) and *phezulu* (up) are the two key words to use in the formulation of the question. *Phansi* stands for all the animals on earth while *phezulu* stands for all that flies. The leader may start with any of these two words but these words need to be alternated everytime.

The game goes on until an error is made either by the leader or the one who gives answers. The contestants are not allowed to repeat animals or birds they have already mentioned. There should be monitors who count the number of names given in each category and to check if there are any mistakes made by the pair. The first one who makes a mistake goes out.

b) The method

1. The leader says: *phansi!* >>> answer: *inkomo* (a beast)
2. The leader says: *phezulu!* >>> answer: *ukhozi* (an eagle)

If my grandmother saw that we had passed her test she would then narrate the folktale.

### 1.8.2 Mastering click sounds

The other trick that my grandmother often used concerns the pronunciation of the click sounds; gq, c and q combined in the following sentence: *Kwagingqika ucu eqolo* (a bead-string slips down the lower part of the backbone). The key or tricky sounds are: g followed by ngq, c and q consecutively. These sounds following each other like this are very difficult to pronounce in a quick rhythm. They are purposefully patterned to train the young mind to maintain the rhythm.

a) The rules of click-sounds game

1. A person is not allowed to breathe in between the words to maintain the same rhythm from the beginning to the end of the sentence. The participant should complete the whole sentences. When the participants manages to complete the sentence without an error, she or he can start again. Playing the second time is also known as the second

round.

2. A person is not allowed to skip any syllable.
3. No stammering.
4. It is a game that has to be played by one person.

A person gets merit by abiding by all the rules above. Very few participants managed the second round in this game. However, from this game we learnt to maintain speed, confidence, independence and pronunciation. In addition, for maintaining the rhythm one would be highly awarded. A person who usually fails to maintain the rhythm is often called *ibhimbi* or *isixhwe* or *idliwa* which literally means one who acts discordantly or sings out of tune. About the importance of rhythm in oral performance Marcel Jousse, in Canonici [op.cit.:6] states:

“ Life is scanned by the timing or rhythmic movements of the heart. Language in an oral performance must imitate or mimic- that same rhythm in order to be completely felt and easily remembered. An oral artist scans her speech in such a way that it can easily open itself to audience in a timely rhythmic participation.”

### 1.8.3 The riddles

1. *Ngikuphaphica ngenkunzi yami ehlala esibayeni esimhlophe* (I give you a riddle about the bull that lives in a white kraal). An answer: *ulimi* (the tongue)
2. *Ngikuphaphica ngengane yami ekhala ingehli emhlane* (I give you a riddle about a child that cries but never gets off the back).  
An answer is: *isisu* (the stomach)
3. *Ngikuphaphica ngomuntu wami ogiya agiye abuye emnyango* (I give you a riddle about a person who dances until she reaches the door and comes back).  
An answer is *umshanelo* (the broom).



When I started school nobody told me that the folktales or traditional games or riddles that I had learnt at home would still be used at school. I thought at school I would learn only something new and quite different.

On the first day at school I was very surprised when my teacher asked each of us to narrate a folktale and any other oral art we had learnt from home. Each one of us taught each other games we already knew.

I have also noticed that some of the oral art that we learnt at home has been collected and described in books by scholars such as Nyembezi C.L.S., Nxumalo O.E.H. and others. But there is a lot of oral literature which is not yet in books.

The examples that I have given above are meant to show that Zulu children grow in an atmosphere of oral literature. They are drilled in this form of art at a very young age. Even those who may not attend school need to know this art because it is part of their lifestyle. For those who attend school it becomes a basis for the new knowledge that the school may provide.

The lack of traditional knowledge amongst Zulu children in the present context has caused concern amongst educators of Zulu language, particularly those who teach at a primary school level. The impact of the loss of this foundation cemented by oral knowledge is severe in the present context because home-based educators are no longer active. In the past educators of home-based oral knowledge did not only narrate folklore to the children but during oral performance children had to be taught to maintain the rhythm through a certain pattern whether in speech or singing or dancing. Maintaining rhythm is a key element in Zulu oral performance.

Normally, educators of oral folklore in the home do not exactly tell the children that they are

teaching them contrast, alliteration or assonance and metaphor in the strict sense of the word. For example, *isalakutshelwa sibona ngomopho* (one who does not take heed to advice learns the hard way) was one of the most popular proverbs that adults used to utter when one of us would not listen. As children we knew when such a proverb was used with effect. We also knew the impact it had to us as children. But by then I never took notice of the beautiful alliteration created by the letter -s- in *isalakutshelwa* as well as *sibona* and the assonance created by the letter -i- in both words. The awareness towards such knowledge has been extended by the school.

The point that is being highlighted with these examples is that the folklore that a Zulu child acquires in the home becomes building blocks on which an experienced educator may lay his or her foundation with regards to the introduction of different genres of Zulu oral literature.

#### 1.9 A call for the revival of local oral knowledge

Knowledge about the origins of proverbs calls for a great deal of research to trace the precise history of particular proverbs in their local setting. However, one may ask: what do we gain by knowing who invented a proverb or how it came about into our language?

If a proverb makes a general application of a particular incident, it is necessary that the meaning and implications of the incident are obvious to the speaker and hearer for easy communication and understanding of the message.

If the meaning and implications of a historical allusion are generally intelligible, it is possible that such proverbs may live long with an identifiable connection with the historical fact in the minds of people but if this connection can be lost the life of a historical proverb usually becomes brief or less intelligible.

There is a pressing call for the revival of traditional oral knowledge in our communities in the present context. This is one of the main reasons that motivated me to take proverbs to the people who know the traditions and origins of certain proverbs and could thus offer explanations from the historical, the linguistic and the customary points of view as proverbs are an integral part of indigenous oral knowledge. Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) or traditional knowledge will be dealt with in detail in chapter two. However, it seems appropriate to say something about these systems in this introduction.

The whole system of Indigenous thought is a reflection on the ways in which local people can be organised to meet the local demands by using local resources together with their traditional knowledge. This endeavor is aimed at educating local communities in a self-reliant way towards the protection of their environment and values within the framework of indigenous knowledge.

This indigenous thought is also concerned about analysing and comparing traditional systems of knowledge and modern concepts and practice for a new paradigm of sustainable development. The most possible way to sustaining local knowledge and developing local communities is through the creation of a new mechanism of change based upon the values, beliefs and systems of original knowledge of our ancestors.

Alternative ways of knowing and ways of sharing knowledge so as to reinforce core community values, cultural practices and the knowledge systems need to be explored so that traditional knowledge may eventually be linked with western scientific research.

The recognition of Indigenous Knowledge Systems is aimed at facilitating a multilateral dialogue between local communities to strengthen and revitalise indigenous practices by creating a new awareness among the general public about their relevance in the present context as well as their effectiveness in the future. The focus is on identification and

dissemination of indigenous oral knowledge and practice to help mainstream the application of this knowledge into the activities of developments and to optimise the benefits of its involvement.

An awareness towards the recognition of Indigenous Knowledge Systems is a strong trend which seems to impact indigenous peoples of Africa in particular to go back to their roots and take pride in them as a means of searching for new alternatives to natural resource management and social development through the involvement of local people.

#### **1.10 Some of the key aspects to be dealt with during interviews**

The questions that will be asked during interviews will therefore deal especially with aspects such as the following:

- a. The relationship between humans and animals, in language (metaphors) as well as in religion, in magic practices and in life as a whole.
- b. The contrasting terms of the referent, the 'word' and the 'thing' it refers to, and the concept it conveys; the element in common between the image and the thing in reality.
- c. The cryptic nature of proverbs engenders many questions as to the exact referent or aspects thereof and consequently on the interpretation of proverbs.
- d. The perceived hierarchy of the species in the animal kingdom as a reflection of the religious, philosophical and cosmological systems of humans; particularly, the Zulu society.
- e. The pervasive impact of proverbial lore on language and customs.

### 1.11 The theoretical and conceptual framework of research

This introductory chapter sets out to deal with the theoretical and methodological approaches needed to place the entire study in perspective. This research is conceptually based on two main aspects: the nature of language as a symbolic representation of reality, and the Zulu cultural and conceptual world, which conditions this representation. In order to represent reality, language constantly borrows literal, visual and emotive signals from the environment, thus enriching the imagery bank that constitutes the basis of a group's language and culture. Animal lore, as evidenced by African and particularly Zulu proverbs seems to constitute a large part of the cultural imagery that might convey figurative meaning.

Proverbs are typical examples of a situation where the referent, say the animal, or the bird conveys a literal meaning by its actions, but this meaning is interpreted both literally and figuratively by the observer who analyses the proverb. A proverb in nature summarises a situation, passes a judgement, or offers a course of action. It is a consolation in difficulties and a guide when choice is made. All in all, it expresses a morality suited to the human behaviour. The advice is the common place in that it is cautious and conservative in recommending responsible or reasonable choices.

The 'figurative meaning' may not be there in the 'real world' of the animal in question, but is interpreted as being there by the observer. This type of observation opens the door to the creation of the metaphors, which fill our languages, and especially Zulu, a language for many years mainly used for oral communication. Artistic oral creativity consists, according to Canonici (1996:4), in giving expression to even trite events by employing dramatic imagery and carefully constructed linguistic expressions, so as to make the oral utterance striking, memorable and easily recalled.

The theoretical bases of this research are philosophical ideas that explain the very reasons for the origin of language as a symbolic representation of the "real world", especially in a

purely oral form of civilization where the spoken word reigns supreme. The ideas about oral style and oral culture, as expounded by Albert Lord (1960), Marcel Jousse (1989) and Walter Ong (1982), should prove invaluable in this context.

The other pillar of my theoretical construction regards Zulu cosmology, which includes aspects of philosophy, religion and magic. The oral word, according to Ong (1982), is the bearer of creative power in the minds of its users, and may produce magic actions or events once it is uttered with authority. The animals and birds portrayed in Zulu proverbs are much more than rhetoric metaphors: they become sources of magic energies. Krige's (1967), Berglund's (1975) and Canonici's (1995 & 1996) works should be of help in this respect.

#### **1.12 Survey of precedent and existing secondary literary sources**

“The most basic and perhaps most daunting challenge facing a proverb researcher in any African language is the challenge of finding out what has already been published about proverbs in that language. The literature is spread all over, it occurs in a variety of languages and journals as well as in appendices or chapters of books on other subjects. It may be surviving only as an unpublished manuscript in an archive or an attic... Any researcher is eager to know who else is working or has worked on his/her area or topic.” {African Proverbs Project, [op.cit.:4]}

To find other scholars who have done a research, project or paper on my area which deals with both bird and animal metaphors reflected in proverbs from a Zulu perspective was the most difficult task. A few scholars who might have also researched in this area, their work is neither on the Internet for other scholars to browse through it nor published in books to be used as references. This research sets out to make a contribution towards this need.

##### **1.12.1 Local principal literary sources**

Zulu proverbs have been collected since the beginning of the literary encounter between

South Africa and the West. The writers of the earliest grammars and dictionaries of the 1850's (Grout, Colenso, Döhne, Bleek) used proverbs as examples of language usage, a practice that was continued in A.T. Bryant's 1905 *Zulu Dictionary* and by Doke and Vilakazi's 1947 monumental *Zulu-English Dictionary*. Zulu proverbs have been studied and explained in various fashions by subsequent scholars, each with particular interests in mind.

A 58 page publication, printed in 1946, is R.G. Dunning's *Two hundred and sixty-four Zulu proverbs, idioms, etc., and the cries of thirty-seven birds*. The James Stuart Collection at the Killie Campbell Library has the original text of Stuart's *Zulu Proverbs and Popular Sayings*, edited by D.M. Malcolm and published by Griggs in Durban. A 1978 edition (possible re-print) exists at the Malherbe Library of Natal University.

The most important work on the subject is C.L.S. Nyembezi's M.A. thesis, published by Wits University Press in 1954 as *Zulu Proverbs* and reprinted by Shooter and Shuter in 1990. This work has remained standard for many years. It divides the proverbs according to subject, but especially according to external structure. It also offers interesting points about the origin and meaning of each proverb.

A recent collection has been published by Mazisi Kunene (Via Afrika, 1994), who does not however, distinguish between proverbs, which are supposed to be carriers of ancient popular wisdom, and idioms, which constitute unusual usage of the language. A careful reader realizes that many entries are the author's own creation and lack the "popular acceptance" criterion, which is, according to most scholars, essential for an utterance to be acknowledged as a proverb.

A similar confusion between proverbs and idioms is found in P.J. Zungu's mimeographed *Corpus of Traditional Vs Modern Zulu Proverbs in IsiZulu Sobumbano* (University of Durban Westville, 1998), which presents a number of comic adaptations of proverbs as used in modern

times. A more theoretical approach is contained in the same author's 1996 paper: "New Lamps for Old: Relexification of traditional Zulu proverbs and idioms."

W.N. Maphalala researched the *Oral Traditional Aspects of Zulu Proverbs* for her MA mini thesis at the Library of Natal University's Orality-Literacy programme (1990). The scope of this research was the identification of compositional structures, according to Albert Lord's and Walter Ong's ideas on oral style. A comprehensive but rather brief study of the nature and structure of Zulu proverbs is contained in N.N. Canonici's (1996) *Zulu Oral Traditions*. This is only a chapter in the book, and does not intend to present a wide selection.

#### 1.12.2 Some of the local literary sources used occasionally

I have already mentioned a number of publications, which will form either the theoretical or the practical basis of the present research. Among those that will be used occasionally, I point out the following few:

- a. Berglund, A.I. (1976): *Zulu Thought Patterns and Symbolism.*
- b. Biyela, N.G. (1998): *The Figure of King Shaka in Past and Contemporary Oral Sources.* (Master's Dissertation).
- c. Canonici, N.N. (1995): *Trickery and Tricksters in Zulu Folktales*
- d. Cope, A.T. (1968): *Izibongo: Zulu-Praise Poems.*
- e. Krige, E.J. (1967): *The Social System of the Zulu People.*
- f. Msimang, C.T. (1975): *Kusadliwa Ngoludala.*
- g. Nyembezi, C.L.S. et al. (1966): *Inqolobane Yesizwe.*

#### 1.12.3 Related international publications

The following internationally known scholars have published papers and even books on



proverbs, which are going to be studied and used for the present research:

- Beidelman, T.O. (1975): "Ambiguous Animals: Two Theriomorphic Metaphors in Kaguru Folklore." *Africa*, Vol.45. No.2
- Chadwick, D.H. (1983): *Etosha: Namibia's Kingdom of Animals* in *National Geographic* Vol. 163, no.3. Official Journal of the National Geographic Society, Washington D.C.
- Gustaf, S. (1931): *Meaning and Change of Meaning*.
- Bukenya, A. (1994): *Understanding oral Literature*.
- Finnegan, R. (1970): *Oral Literature in Africa: Its nature, significance and social context*. Hoffman, R.R. (1980): "Peacock Looks at its Legs: Cognitive Science & Figurative Language." In R.P.Honeck & R.R. Hoffman 1980: *Cognition & Figurative Language*.
- Honeck, R.P. (1980): "Proverbs, meaning, & Group Structure" In R.P. Honeck & R.R. Hoffman 1980: *Cognition & Figurative Language*.
- Mbiti, J.S. (1990): *African Religions & Philosophy*. Heinemann. (Second edition).
- Mieder, W. & Dundes, A. (1981): *The Wisdom of many*.
- Okpewho, I. (1992): *African Oral Literature*.
- Ong, W. (1982): *Orality and literacy*.
- Vansina, J. (1969): *Oral Tradition*.
- (2000): African Wildlife Foundation: African Wildlife. Washington DC.
- (2001): Global Mapping International: African Proverbs Project.

While previous works will be consulted, I intend to go well beyond what has been done already, especially through a deeper understanding of oral culture and through the contribution of oral experts.

### 1.13 **Outline of the thesis**

This thesis consists of eight chapters:

#### Chapter 1

This introductory chapter is meant to place the research against its theoretical framework. It deals with the language as a symbolic representation of reality. The symbol is expressed by the word, which conveys an image. Special attention is paid to both animal and bird images as metaphors of human social behaviour. The theoretical foundation is based on the following aspects:

- a. Philosophy of language which focuses on the “sign”, the “thing” and the “meaning” and metaphors as part of language.
- b. African relationship between humans and animals, as reflected in cosmology, religion, medicine and magic practices.
- c. Proverbs as distilled traditional wisdom expressed in metaphors, which stimulate the imagination, intelligence and deep reflection through definitions and explanations of key terminology. Proverbs are both the results of the imagery-making system of oral culture and the preserver of such a communal imagery bank. Proverbs refer to the natural environment and also reflect Zulu cultural behaviour patterns and moral beliefs.
- d. Review of existing literature on proverbs and methods of field-research employed are considered as a point of departure for this study.

## Chapter 2

This chapter concentrates on both the recognition and sustainability of Indigenous Knowledge Systems; the focus being on the use of *imithi* (indigenous medicines) by herbalists in KwaZulu-Natal as these practices which involve use of traditional medicines vary greatly from country to country and from region to region as they are influenced by factors such as culture, religion, mentality and philosophy.

A large portion of the population in a number of developing countries still relies mainly on traditional medicines to satisfy their primary health-care needs. KwaZulu –Natal is no exception in this regard. If local people can utilize their indigenous medicines continuously for the development of their primary health-care systems in their communities, it is thought that eventually indigenous medicines may coexist with universalised scientific medicine.

The recognition of Indigenous Knowledge Systems can also create a thematic thread linking the African Renaissance and *ubuntu* (humaneness) concept which is the most cherished value in the African continent.

## Chapter 3

We use language for many purposes including to be expressive to make our feelings known, to communicate with others, and even with ourselves, and to persuade people. By our language we identify ourselves, who and what we are and where we stand. How we behave, what we think and how others will think of us is achieved through language.

Body communication is unspoken communication through unconscious gestures, symbols and positions of the body for instance, the clothes people wear may convey messages: culture (eye contact/avoiding or receiving with either both hands or with one hand). Marital status usually

indicated by a wedding ring.

Communicative code is crucial for explaining and understanding conversational conduct. This chapter further suggests that sending a message does not serve any purpose if the receiver of the message does not understand it. The success of the communication process in oral or literate culture, and in verbal or non-verbal speech act lies with the receiver understanding the message and responding appropriately to it.

#### Chapter 4

In this chapter both literacy and orality are perceived as complementing each other in the process of human communication and interaction. This means that in the present context competence in orality and literacy is essential as both systems are means to acting in the world in order to establish relationships, to engage with others in reciprocal exchange, to integrate new knowledge into existing knowledge, to sustain cultural ties, to obtain and convey ideas and information.

Proverbs, like the other genres, employ a lot of figures of speech derived from the social, economic, political, physical and cultural environment which are not difficult to identify. But these figures are used to represent certain meanings. In both speech and writing and indeed other forms of verbal communication, proverbs are embellishers. In this chapter a proverb is also looked at as a practical as well as moral wisdom which is based on experience or foresight in the oral culture.

#### Chapter 5

The chapter will focus on the symbolic representation of Shaka's figure and behaviour through the use of images of four wild animals which are often referred to as Zulu "royal

animals". Proverbs, which are regarded as a national codification of Zulu society, become instruments of its thoughts about the personality, behaviour and attitudes of their leaders, the kings. Accordingly, language as a vital characteristic of human behaviour has adopted a variety of animal symbols to reflect these thoughts. References to wild and huge animals also pervade in *izibongo* (praise-poems), especially Shaka's *izibongo* and those of other kings that came after him. Both proverbs and *izibongo* seem to reflect some basic tenets with regard to the status, integrity and respect towards the kings, as well as the growth of Zulu society which took place in a form of a crescendo, that is, growing from a small clan to a mighty nation with its formidable army and ambitious king, Shaka, through the use of magnified animal symbols.

## Chapter 6

Communities can only promote themselves by training their offspring to overcome their basic urges and become responsible citizens. This process must not only educate successive generations in values and traditions but must constantly reverse the children's initial instincts to be selfish. Proverbs dealing with activities in the veld are used as paradigm to regulate conduct of young herdsmen as they take the form of decrees, tenets, statutes or principles. Proverbs, in a sense permit, prohibit, or require the performance of acts according to the ethics of conduct. Achieving these results requires hard work and restraint from parents, using discipline to instil a code of good behaviour to their children.

From early childhood, through adolescence to full adulthood the sense of community and humane living are highly cherished values of traditional African life. For traditional Africans, the community is basically sacred where food is a commodity to be shared and consumed together as a common enterprise. References to food abound in proverbs. They reveal in a practical way a host of cultural tenets, norms and customs.

An important feature of this chapter will be the all-permeating aspects of sharing meat of a sacrificed beast and the observation of customary norms of etiquette during national

rituals. According to Zulu perception, a sacrificed beast is an entity to be shared by all members of the community, because it is a unifying factor as every portion of the body of the beast represents a certain group of the community. As a result, during national rituals, guests are not served as individuals with the culturally divided parts of the sacrificed beast, but as groups of a united community of both the living and the dead. These two communities mysteriously come together during a ritual to share.

According to Lambert (1993:301) the living and the dead are bound together in a community in which sacrifice becomes the food given to the elder members of the lineage who live, brood and watch over the younger from whom they expect their due.

## Chapter 7

Society is formed by a common culture and language and is moulded by the acceptance of customs, ways of life, ideas and ideals. This chapter deals with social behaviour that complies with rules which promote good social relationships. It concentrates on proverbs, which reflect the essence of responsible behaviour, starting with courtship which was a real competition and a dynamic romantic enterprise among young people of both sexes during traditional times. It involved competition because during traditional times adulthood and public ranking were only achieved through marital status in Zulu society. Therefore, courtship was a national moral incentive to facilitate young people towards this goal.

Parental responsibility as one of the major marital roles is also a key element in this chapter. Irresponsible behaviour being a cause of social hostility is severely reprimanded.

## Chapter 8

### Summary and conclusions

The summary offers concluding comments on the study, how language as a carrier of

cultural symbols of society, enshrined in metaphors, contributed towards Zulu communal management, and how metaphors suggested the related idea about humans and animals living together in a friendly environment. The study further looks at the moral value of the Zulu proverbs and their importance in the present context, particularly in educational institutions, which are moulding the future generation.

This introductory chapter has presented a number of basic concepts important for the layout as well as the development of the whole study. The introduction has attempted to give an overall view of the thesis and of the important role played by the images in decoding meaning couched beneath proverbial metaphors.

## Chapter 2

### **RECOGNITION AND SUSTAINABILITY OF INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE SYSTEMS: A POINT OF DEPARTURE FOR A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF THE FUNCTIONS OF BOTH ETHNO-BOTANICAL AND ZOOLOGICAL *UMUTHI* (MEDICINE), AFRICAN RENAISSANCE AND *UBUNTU* (HUMANENESS)**

#### **Introduction**

Indigenous Knowledge Systems generally explore topics ranging from the design of research for acquiring the task specific knowledge required, the nature of knowledge, the use of knowledge, philosophical issues such as beliefs systems and socio-economic practices pertaining to resource management that can provide a framework for social development.

However, this chapter restricts itself to the definition of indigenous peoples together with their Indigenous Knowledge Systems. It sets out to expound on the fundamental philosophy of Zulu indigenous *imithi* (medicines or herbs) used by *izinyanga* (herbalists) for primary health-care systems to enhance our understanding of them as a means to accord their protection and raise their social value and status as a system of local knowledge and to create a capacity for their conceptual and analytical framework.

Many aspects of Indigenous Knowledge Systems seem to overlap with other focus areas, such as the African Renaissance as well as the regeneration of *ubuntu* (humaneness) which is the soul of African local communities as their ethics is based on this concept. The recognition of indigenous peoples together with their traditional oral knowledge is given a prominence of its own as a gateway towards the development of local communities, putting them in the spotlight for the integration with a global community.



## 2.1 A great loss

Hardison (1993:1) in {Indigenous Knowledge Listserv} states:

“The world has suffered and continues to suffer from a profound loss of indigenous peoples and rural groups and their knowledge about the natural world constructed from their intimate ties to land and place. This loss has been accompanied by neglect and marginalization of their practices and beliefs, often figured as inferior forms of knowing to be replaced by universalised knowledge derived from the Western scientific tradition.”

According to the above statement the world has suffered two major losses which were caused by marginalisation of indigenous peoples and their traditional knowledge systems. Western scientists have until recently ignored Traditional Environmental Knowledge because they assumed much of its validity has been lost owing to Western assimilation of indigenous peoples and their knowledge systems. As a result, they also dismissed any aspects of traditional knowledge in favour of the Western preoccupation which excluded integration of local knowledge into the activities of development partners and to optimise the benefits of development assistance.

It is thought that due to failure of the recognition of their traditional knowledge in the world of modern science and technology indigenous peoples lost a sense of belonging because the knowledge they had could not be recognised as something they could use to identify themselves with and to share with other communities. As a result, traditional knowledge is an under-utilised resource in the development process which is at the risk of becoming extinct. But who are these indigenous peoples who are referred to as lost?

### 2.1.1 Defining indigenous peoples

“Indigenous peoples or aboriginal peoples are so –called because they were

living on their lands before settlers came from elsewhere; they are the descendants- according to one definition- of those who inhabited a country or a geographical region at the time when people of different cultures or ethnic origins arrived, the new arrivals later becoming dominant through conquest, occupation, settlement or other means.” {Fact Sheet No.9, Rev.1 1995:1}

In the {Indigenous Knowledge Listserv} (1993:2) it is stated:

“Throughout human history, whenever dominant neighbouring peoples have expanded their territories or settlers from far away have acquired new lands by force, the cultures and livelihoods- even the existence- of indigenous peoples have been endangered. The threats to indigenous people’s cultures and lands, to their status and other legal rights as distinct groups and as citizens, do not always take the same forms as in previous times.”

Among many indigenous peoples which the above definitions seem to refer to are: in Africa, the Khoi, San or Bushman, the Inuit or Eskimo in Alaska, Canada and western Greenland, the Ainu in Japan, the Maori of New Zealand, the Indians of the Americas and the Aboriginal of Australia etc.,.

The phrase ‘Indigenous Peoples’ is an inclusive term which accommodates various ethnic groups which are not homogenous in nature. In each country there are strong ethnic differences in a way that it is difficult to determine to what extent differences are. Some of the differences can be mentioned in passing. Such differences might be things of great interest to each ethnic group such as customs, religions, languages, belief systems, kinship systems, social values, environmental resource management and governance.

From the above definitions one gets an understanding that the word “indigenous” refers specifically to the first inhabitants of the country whose epistemology, rationality and philosophy in general have been marginalized under the “colonial” rule.

The above definitions about the first inhabitants entail certain exclusions and inclusions.

Defining first inhabitants and then defining certain peoples as perpetrators might appear as a biased judgement. We are dealing with the most debatable definition of what the exact criteria of indigenesness are because there might be indigenous peoples whose country or place has never been colonised but still suffer marginalisation of some sort whether economically or emotionally or socially.

It is assumed that no definition of indigenous peoples will be politically neutral. Because of the sensitivity of this issue, it is very important to keep an open mind on the question of which group is to count as indigenous peoples.

Still on the note of indigenesness, it should be mentioned that although Zulu traditional oral knowledge is used as an example of indigenous knowledge in this chapter, it should not be thought that one claims that the Zulu are the first inhabitant in South Africa or in KwaZulu-Natal where they are settled presently. The Zulu traditional oral knowledge used in this chapter is analysed within a broader African perspective as the Zulu are categorised as indigenous to the continent of Africa under the group called the 'Bantu' whose ancestors originated from south of the Sahara.

Zulu is a rather recent historical reality. It was only at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century that Shaka as a military genius, a consummate statesman, a tactician and a revolutionary with good reason, and through his rapid series of conquests managed to join scores of chiefdoms and a huge amount of Nguni clans into a single kingdom which he named the Zulu nation. He also imposed his own language, namely isiZulu which was reconstructed from isiNguni, a language which was predominantly spoken by a majority of Nguni groups prior to Shaka's reign.

According to Archeological records and rock paintings found in almost every province of South Africa, the Khoi/San are believed to be the first inhabitants of Southern Africa. These

findings allude to the fact that the migratory trend of the Bantu group which mostly came from north of the equator towards southern Africa took place when the Khoi/San groups were already settled in southern Africa. It is also maintained that when the colonists arrived in South Africa, the Khoi/San groups were deprived of their land and livestock. If the following statement is taken into consideration it appears that the Khoi/San like other indigenous peoples of the world also suffered marginalisation from colonial rulers. In this context, “colonial” refers to Eurowestern settlers from Portugal, France, Holland/Belgium and England etc.,

“Once the Dutch settled at the Cape in 1652, many Khoi were enslaved by the Dutch as means of getting their cattle for fresh meat. The effects of the loss of their livestock forced the Khoi into the life of the colony as labourers.”  
(Kagiso, 1996: 36)

As the great loss that has been already mentioned with regard to indigenous peoples also included the loss of their traditional knowledge systems, the following discussion focuses on the Indigenous Knowledge Systems.

### **2.1.2 What are Indigenous Knowledge Systems?**

“Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) refer to the complex set of knowledge and technologies existing and developed around specific conditions of populations and communities indigenous to a particular geographic area.”  
{‘National Research Foundation’, 2001:1}

Seepe in Mail & Guardian (2001:1) states:

“Indigenous Knowledge Systems refer to intricate knowledge systems acquired over generations by communities as they interact with the environment. It encompasses technology, social, economic, philosophic, learning and governance systems.”

Indigenous Knowledge Systems are systems of knowledge in relation to education and

learning, basic belief systems socio-economic systems, health-care systems, ethical value systems and communication systems, etc. These are major systems that are generally embedded in traditional society.

Warren (1991:1) maintains that an Indigenous Knowledge System is the local knowledge that is unique to a given culture or society. From his point of view Indigenous Knowledge Systems contrast with the International Knowledge Systems generated by universities, research institutions and private firms because the former is the basis for local-level decision making for example, in agriculture, health-care systems, food preparation, education, natural-resource management, and a host of other activities in rural communities.

According to these definitions, traditional knowledge is both a natural and a national resource which is unique to a particular culture or society. It is an asset which is usually held by a community rather than individuals. It is the knowledge in which indigenous peoples take pride as a natural heritage and through which they can identify themselves.

### **2.1.3 Why is Indigenous Knowledge important?**

According to {IK-Why} (2002:1), Indigenous Knowledge (IK) is important for the following reasons:

- IK provides problem solving strategies for local communities especially for the poor
- IK represents an important contribution to global development knowledge
- IK systems are at risk of becoming extinct
- IK is relevant for the development process
- IK is an under-utilised resource in the development process
- Learning from IK, by investigating first what local communities know and have, can improve understanding of local conditions and provide a productive context for activities

designed to help the communities

#### 2.1.4 **Objectives of the Indigenous Knowledge programme**

A crucial design goal of an Indigenous Knowledge programme is to develop knowledge, preserving knowledge, using knowledge and sharing knowledge in a communal discourse. This programme has also a long-term goal of the identification and analysis of available and required knowledge in its processes and then to integrate the Indigenous Knowledge systems into the work practice of the community in decision-making and problem solving in connection with sustainable management of natural resources and social development.

This explains why an indigenous knowledge programme should have one end goal which is utilisation of knowledge by human communities because one of the primary objectives of this programme is to enable the development of community to learn more about the indigenous/traditional practices in local communities so as to better adapt global knowledge to local conditions, and to design activities to better serve the community needs.

#### 2.2 **A positive trend towards indigenous peoples and their traditional knowledge systems: A prestigious Decade**

“The UN declared 1993 as the International Year for the World’s Indigenous Peoples. The Decade from 1995 to 2004 has been declared the International Decade of the World’s Indigenous People.” (Perkins, 1999:2)

The prestigious Decade dedicated to the indigenous peoples of the world by the UN might not be seen as just a free gift. Such a dedication appears to be a huge challenge to the indigenous peoples because the UN seems to be telling them that it is high time for them to show the

world who they really are. Probably, the UN is expecting the indigenous peoples to respond to its challenge during this decade.

### **2.2.1 South Africa and the prestigious Decade**

For the indigenous people of South Africa this is a decade with a unique history. It is a decade of the first democratic elections which took place in 1994, a year after the declaration of the prestigious Decade.

On 26 August to 4 September 2002 the World Summit on Sustainable Development was held in an African state, which is South Africa, for the first time.

### **2.2.2 Africa and the prestigious Decade**

This decade means a lot to the indigenous peoples of Africa as a whole because during this decade both the New Partnership for Africa's Development and African Union were born in Africa to promote both economic and social development of this continent.

It is worth to mention that the idea of dedicating the 21<sup>st</sup> century to Africa has also come to the minds of some statesmen during this decade. When the President of Italy, Ciampi was interviewed on Television concerning the 21<sup>st</sup> century, he declared that this century is an African century. When he addressed the South African Parliament on 14 March (2002:6) he stated:

“I deeply feel the responsibility to say aloud to all of you here today: the 21<sup>st</sup> century must belong to Africa.”

Kilgour (2001:3) maintains: “This must be the century of Africa.”

Why do statesmen see the 21<sup>st</sup> century as supposed to belong to Africa? Can this still be

an influence of the prestigious Decade declared by the UN?

The celebration of the prestigious Decade ends in 2004. It is unlikely that the indigenous peoples of the world would have achieved all their goals during this short space of time. In that way, more time is needed for these developing countries. It is assumed that the idea of dedicating the 21<sup>st</sup> century to the indigenous peoples of Africa in particular is meant to meet this need.

Through this second dedication the international statesmen might be saying to the indigenous peoples of Africa: we are not letting you sit on your laurels until you prove to the global community that you have a capacity to regenerate Africa on your own.

Like the UN, the international statesmen seem to be challenging the indigenous peoples of Africa to be 'reborn'; and the right time is the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

### **2.3 Fears about dedicating the 21<sup>st</sup> century to Africa**

For some, dedicating the 21<sup>st</sup> century to the continent of Africa appears to be a drastic step that might not bear any fruits. People have a right to be skeptic about this dedication because the 21<sup>st</sup> century has just begun. Nobody is sure of what response from Africa will be like because this is a huge mission for the African continent and its indigenous peoples. If indigenous peoples of Africa accept this 'offer' they have to know that they are accepting a mission with huge challenges and responsibilities.

### **2.4 Other special centuries**

Generally, both the 15<sup>th</sup> and the 16<sup>th</sup> centuries are referred to as European centuries because from the mid-15<sup>th</sup> century to the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, an age of enlightenment began in



Italy and spread over the entire Europe. Since this enlightenment was like a new revelation or 're-birth' to the people of Europe, it was given a unique name which is the Renaissance.

The 20<sup>th</sup> century was claimed by America. During this era America became a giant power with significant economic and social developments. It was a century of the first man on the moon, one who carried an American flag.

The dedication of the 21<sup>st</sup> century to Africa may be another form of the recognition and development initiative of Indigenous Knowledge Systems of Africa as these Indigenous Knowledge Systems are the key elements which might help the indigenous peoples of Africa to put themselves in the spotlight as their knowledge about the world around them, identity and heritage lie in these systems. These are the systems that might also help them in the regeneration of Africa in this century.

The following discussion sets out to explore one of the oldest traditional Systems which is the health-care system. This discussion concentrates on the use of indigenous medicines which are made from animal, plant and mineral products. These traditional medicines still play a major role in primary health-care practices in KwaZulu-Natal.

## 2.5 Traditional medicine

“The term ‘traditional medicine’ refers to ways of protecting and restoring health that existed before the arrival of modern medicine. As the term implies, these approaches to health belong to the traditions of each country, and have been handed down from generation to generation. Traditional systems have had to meet the needs of the local communities for many centuries.” {‘Fact Sheet N 134’, 1996:1}

This statement suggests that nearly all cultures from ancient times to today have used plants, animal products and minerals as a source of medicine. This makes traditional medicines the

oldest known indigenous health-care products.

However, it is necessary to point out that the situation in the use of traditional medicine is quite different from country to country. In other countries traditional medicine is a priority for health-care while in others the role of traditional medicine is treated as complementary or alternative medicine.

In many developing countries traditional medicines are still the mainstay of health-care systems. In developed countries modern scientific institutions still depend on both plants and animal products and the knowledge gained from them for some essential drugs.

### 2.5.1 *Izinyanga* (herbalists)

“To heal someone is to give life.” (‘Traditional Healers in Southern Africa,’ 1998:3) Giving life and hope is the primary duty of traditional practitioners called *izinyanga*. The part played by *izinyanga* as primary health-care workers as well as protectors of society even from natural disasters is a significant aspect in the following discussion.

*Ubunyanga* (herbalism) is a specialised traditional knowledge system which is held by a few people who have had a special training. Strictly speaking, an *inyanga* is a person who is supposed to prepare *umuthi* (a traditional herb/medicine) and treats illness mainly with plant products, animal remains and mineral products. *Izinyanga* should not be confused with other traditional healers who often function in the absence of the patient. Diviners for example, might use a form of *ukuchitha amathambo* (to throw divining bones) as diagnostic-tools in conjunction with intuition. This type of diagnosis involves the ability to consciously interpret through images or symbols produced by the arrangement of the bones that have been thrown and apply them to the health of the patient. Diviners can also use their dreams through which the ancestors give them diagnostic insights.

### 2.5.2 Traditional instruction methods

#### a) An assistant

Every trained *inyanga* is supposed to have an assistant who is called *uhlaka* in Zulu. An assistant is chosen by *inyanga* himself. It can be any member of the community or one of his sons or relatives.

Through close observation of his master's healing practices *uhlaka* usually ends up learning some knowledge about the administration of medicine. *Uhlaka* assists his master in the preparation and dispensation of medicine

#### b) An Apprentice

There is a difference between an *uhlaka* and a novice for herbalism. A traditional medical apprentice is a person who learns about medicines under the guidance of a well-skilled and experienced *inyanga* with an aim of obtaining accreditation at the end of apprenticeship.

### 2.5.3 *Izinyanga* as medical educators

Well-trained *izinyanga* hold an esteemed and powerful position in the field of traditional medicine. They are also regarded as national educators in the field of herbalism. The knowledge they have acquired from their predecessors is transmitted through a word of mouth to prospective *izinyanga* during the orientation programme where the fundamentals of all aspects of traditional medicine are introduced to prepare a candidate for the apprenticeship experience.

Specific introductory 'lessons' which address the basic knowledge about *umuthi* (herbal

medicine) which is either made from plants or animal remains. Knowledge about the combination of herbs and animal remains to make *umuthi* is a prerequisite for the prospective *inyanga*. Why? *Izinyanga* also work as pharmacists. Therefore, prospective *izinyanga* have to be trained as both ethnozoologists and ethnobotanists because both flora and fauna are the significant components in the field of traditional pharmacology.

Linda Morganstein (1996:1-2) states:

“Ethnobotanists explore how plants are used for such things as food, shelter, medicine, clothing, hunting, and religious ceremonies. Ethnobotany has its roots in botany, the study of plants. Botany, in turn, originated in part from an interest in finding plants to help fight illness. In fact, medicine and botany have always had close ties.”

When one takes into consideration what the following statement says about ethnozoology, one can see why *izinyanga* as both healers and pharmacists should have good knowledge about ethnozoology.

“The discipline of ethnozoology focuses on the ways in which animals influence the people they interact with –how people throughout the history of civilization have adapted to the animals they share their environment with and utilised animals for food, clothing, work, worship and companionship.”  
{‘Ethnozoology Index, 2002:1}

As traditional medicines include ingredients mainly from both animals and plants, it is likely that prospective *izinyanga* have to first qualify as both ethnobotanists and ethnozoologists before they can be regarded as fully qualified *izinyanga*.

Diagnosis, prescriptions and treatment are also introduced and practiced during the apprenticeship period so that prospective *izinyanga* sharpen their mental and physical skills to become familiar with all aspects of healing.

Amateurs are also helped to develop the principles of self-directed learning and life-long learning skills that will be necessary in private practice when the apprenticeship period is over between three to five years.

#### 2.5.4 *Izinyanga* as primary health-care workers

Common complaints seen by *izinyanga* include:

- Skin problems such as abscesses, boils skin eruptions such as acne and eczema
- Digestive disorders, ulcers, irritable bowel syndrome and indigestion
- Heart and circulatory problems such as high blood pressure and diabetes
- Gynaecological disorders such as menstrual pains, infertility, sexually transmitted diseases such as syphilis and menopausal problems
- Other conditions include: arthritis, headaches, allergic responses, influenza, asthma, and hysteria

#### 2.6 Specialisation

Another aspect in herbalism is that of specialisation. Some of *izinyanga* treat only children, snake-bites, set broken bones, work as specialists in animal husbandry and seed protection. Others specialise in war- medicine, or in setting up protective charms against natural disasters such as lightning.

When there is a severe drought in the land, it is *inyanga* who is a specialist in weather matters who prepares medicines to be used during the pilgrimage for asking for rain from uMmvelinqangi (Creator) on the mountain.

After war, military *izinyanga* prepare purification medicines that the warriors have to use

during the ritual of purification prior to their meeting with their families.

### 2.6.1 Astrology and herbal medicine

“Astrology is a study of the positions and relationships of the Sun, Moon, Stars, and Planets in order to judge their influence on human actions.” {‘The Lore of Astrology,’2002:1}

Astrology amongst African societies does not seem to be an aspect that attracts many researchers and scholars. It might happen that some researchers do not think that traditional African peoples have any idea about this field. According to Tyrrell (1983: 220) traditionalists were well aware of the link between astronomical phenomena and the regular cycle of the seasons and nature.

For *izinyanga* the astronomical phenomena is an element of importance. They associate their medical practice with the knowledge of astrology because there are certain plants that have to be collected from the veld at specific times, such as at sunrise, at dusk, or during a particular phase of the moon. Some plants can fluctuate during the moon’s cycle. A well-trained *inyanga* should also know the phase of the moon during which the majority of animals are involved in breeding so that he may not interfere with the former during this season. Such a season is not appropriate for killing animals for medicinal use.

*Izinyanga* have to know what phase of the moon or season of the year it is in order to tell people about the kind of both plants and animals that are available for medicinal use. Certain plants have to be avoided during a particular season due to allergies they inflict on humans.

Tradition has it that during the expedition to KwaSoshangana in 1828, many of Shaka’s warriors died from *umdlebe*. This is a species of poisonous tree of the Eurphorbia family, *Synadenium arborescens*. It is said that many warriors died because they came at that place

when this fatal plant was blooming. It is said that its scent causes death. It appears that *izinyanga* of war were not sent to examine that environment prior to this expedition.

Dingane is one of the warriors who were in this expedition. But he returned home before reaching their destination to continue with his preparation for the assassination of Shaka. About the death of warriors during this expedition, Dingane's *imbongi* proclaims:

*Uqambi-lankom, ukuba zilahlekile,  
Ziyakuf' umdlebe kwaSoshangana. (Rycroft et al., 1988:70 lines 19-20)*  
(Detached drove of cattle, because the herd has strayed,  
And will be poisoned by the synadenium tree in Soshangana's land)

## 2.6.2 Young women and the phases of the moon

The lunation or the age of the Moon which takes place between the New Moon and the Full Moon has an interval of about 29 ½, days. It means that the Moon celebrates its 'birthday' every New Moon. On the other side every woman who is at the age of receiving menstruation has to count about 28 days every month to know when her next menstruation is due.

This calculation indicates that both the Moon and young women count the duration of their cycles almost the same time. Probably, the Moon and young women start their new cycle or 'New Moon' round about the same time.

Let us look at the image of the moon from the Zulu perspective. If the fraction of the Moon's disk that is illuminated decreases, it symbolises a misfortune.

The reflection of the dark side of the Moon tells the Zulu that the Moon has come across a certain tragedy. Therefore, the Moon disappears into hiding to mourn its misfortune. The dark side that faces the earth is a sign of mourning. According to the Zulu thought the period

between the Full Moon and the New moon is regarded as the time of mourning for the death of the moon.

*Usibanibani usenyangeni* (So and so is on the moon) is an expression that is used when a young woman is in her menstrual cycle. This expression gives us an allusion that for a woman to obtain her menstruation she has to be with the moon. What does this mean?

Normally, when there is death in an African family, women cry in a loud voice and weep for a long time to express their sorrow. If the Moon 'dies' someone has to weep to express this loss. Who could this be except young women who are seen by the Zulu to have a close relationship with the Moon?

According to Zulu thought young women weep every month for their Sister Moon that 'dies' every month too. For the death of their 'elder' Sister Moon, young women do not weep normal tears but they menstruate. Literally speaking, every month, young women 'weep' blood-tears which is a sign of mourning for the most severe tragedy which befalls their Sister Moon in the sky.

It is due to this myth of mourning for the moon tragedy that young women who are in menstrual period are not allowed to eat milk products or enter the kraal. People mourning death of a family member are also not allowed to eat milk products as eating milk products is a sign of joy.

*Izinyanga* who specialise in gynaecological disorders play an important role in the life of young women who still receive their monthly menstruation because this period comes with severe pains to most young women. Because of the pain that young women undergo during menstruation, *izinyanga* have to know all the phases of the Moon in order to prepare appropriate medicines to treat young women who might suffer from menstrual pains.



“Little know that Hippocrates, the Father of Medicine, and the one that medical doctors take an oath from, said that no one should call themselves a doctor unless they were also an astrologer; for no diagnosis could be made without the help of astrological information on the patient.” {‘Medical Astrology,’ 2002:1}

According to Hippocrates there should be a close relationship between astronomical phenomenon and the medical practitioners. Such a suggestion might apply to *izinyanga* as they are also regarded as primary health-care workers.

## 2.7 Classification of Zulu traditional medicines

*Izinyanga* recognise the healing energies that are contained in both animal and plant remains which can be utilised to help their patients regain physical strength which has been impaired. Because of their multiple constituents, most indigenous medicines have quite a broad spectrum of uses. Nevertheless, they can be classified according to the body systems over which they have the most influence. The choice of remedies within each group depends upon the individual case, since each remedy has a slightly different emphasis in its action upon the system. Herbal medicines are basically made from three sources:

### a) Animal products:

- animal substances, such as *izibiba* (snake venom), *udosi lwempisi* (a single hair of a hyena).

“ Mafutas are of medical value due to the fact that animals store excess foodstuffs, steroid hormones, toxins and other chemicals in their fat. The fat also contains photosynthesised compounds and pigments derived from chlorophyll, and this is what makes the *mafutas* such powerful biochemical agents with therapeutic properties. The fat discarded from glandular organs is different in that it contains phosphatides which are insulating and mainly used in the making of *intelezi* (a substance which has psychoactive virtues.” {‘Animal cures,’ 2002:1}

- Animals used for food and products

The hunting and gathering lifestyle of indigenous peoples resulted in almost all meat sources being obtained from hunted animals. Large animals were hunted by stalking them and killing them with weapons. Animal materials are very useful for a variety of purposes.

b) Plant products:

- plant substances, such as *inhlaba* (aloe plant), *impepho* (incense plant).

c) Mineral products

- Mineral substances, such as *isibabuli* (sulphur), *umanyazini* (manganese), salts and stones.

## 2.8 Conditions treated by Zulu traditional medicines

In theory herbal medicines can treat almost any condition from acute to chronic diseases, provided that the patient can develop sufficient vitality to energise the healing process or the body is capable of repairing or regenerating any physical damage already made to itself.

### 2.8.1 Herbal medicine formulas

Zulu herbal medicine is one of the most sophisticated herbal medicine systems in the world. Combinations of a variety of ingredients are used in formulas correlated to each individual's pattern of physical and emotional disharmony. The multi-ingredient formulas may be decocted and drunk or inhaled or licked.

P.F. Mkhize, an *inyanga* at Umlazi, showed me a medicine which combines 46 ingredients. The formulas were crafted together in this medicine to work simultaneously, each ingredient designed to accomplish a part of the overall process of restoring balance in the body.

## 2.9 Forms of diagnosis

The diagnosis of *izinyanga* is based upon: asking, hearing, looking, and feeling.

- Asking: the most direct way of gaining information is by asking questions.
- Hearing: Zulu herbalists do not only listen to what you are telling them, but also listen to the sound of your breathing, coughing, and crying, etc.
- Looking: this involves not only looking at any external signs, such as skin conditions and facial appearance, but also at the general condition of the patient.
- Feeling: palpitation, sensation of hot and cold, moisture levels using hands, etc. are very important in reaching a correct diagnosis especially when we take into consideration that traditional African herbalists do not use a stethoscope and a thermometer.

### 2.9.1 Oral diagnosis

A visit to an *inyanga* is essentially a medical visit. But when you go to see a Zulu herbalist, you can expect a detailed oral examination. A well-trained *inyanga* will always precede any treatment with an in-depth consultation, asking various lifestyles questions and ascertaining what it is a patient wants to achieve and to counter any anxieties a patient may have. Some of the questions may appear highly personal and sometimes embarrassing. Other questions may appear not directly related to your specific complaints. But from the *inyanga*'s point of view, all questions asked are vital for the healing process. For instance, questions about your sexual relationships and about the private parts of your body may be asked. There is one question that almost all Zulu/African *izinyanga* will not forget to ask. It is the question about the

patient and his or her relationship with his or her ancestors.

### 2.9.2 Why oral examination?

The narration, the communication and the passing on of health experiences are a unique healing power. When the patient tells a story about his or her health condition, he or she frees, reveals, opens up and empowers himself or herself to start a process of healing. The patient lets out his or her deep feeling and emotions to share them with the herbalist. In turn the patient gets moral support because the pain is let out in a healing setting. As a result, both the patient and the *inyanga* start the journey of self-understanding, self-discovery and healing of painful memories together.

Even in a health setting, the telling of a story or dialogue is vitally important in oral-based culture. Normal way of communicating is a diagnostic tool because it creates a better mutual understanding. For an *inyanga* to be able to use his abilities to the full, the patient must be as honest and helpful as possible.

Basically, healing comes from within the patient. He or she has to open up his or her inner self first and show a positive attitude towards healing. Both the mind and spirit need to let go of depressing emotions because some of the illnesses may be caused by emotional imbalances.

### 2.10 A patient's health history

Once the questioning is finished, the herbalist should have a sense not only of the problem a patient is having, but empowers his patient with the defense mechanism for the entire person rather than eliminating a single ailment that is prominent at the point in time. After collecting the necessary information about the history of the patient, the herbalist can create a full

picture of his patient. With a well- illustrated picture, the *inyanga* can proceed with the healing process with a brighter insight.

In addition the herbalist will understand the family history, the illnesses that the patient has had in the past and medications he or she has taken.

### 2.10.1 Basic physical diagnosis

#### a) The tongue

The tongue pigmentation can be used to identify the state of our health. The tongue is inspected for colour. A pale tongue may indicate cold or intestinal infection. For example, inflammation from the intestines may show itself on the tongue. If the pigmentation of the tongue appears to be bluish, it might indicate food- poisoning.

#### b) The pulse and body temperature

*Izinyanga* still use traditional methods of determining both the pulse and temperature of their patients. The pulse is usually taken on both *izinhlafuno*, that is, the temples or the spots above the junction of the jaws between ear and eye. To determine the body heat, a hand is put on the forehead or feet.

#### c) The iris: a diagnostic tool

Iridology is a method of diagnosis using the iris to determine the status of our health. From a biological point of view, every body -organ is related to the many thousands nerve endings in the iris, all of which are connected to the brain via the hypothalamus. This makes the area surrounding the iris work like a concentration zone, corresponding to the abdomen and other parts of the body and its systems and organs.

If nerve endings become distorted or discoloured indicating the reflex condition of the various organs of the body, the iris can indicate such a condition.

Following are a few of the expressions associated with the eye which are used in Zulu to explain a particular behaviour or emotional state or health condition:

<i>Ukuba mehlonzima</i>	to be wearied/tired
<i>ukuthwala amehlo</i>	to be boisterous
<i>ukungahlangani kwamehlo</i>	to be dishonest/deceitful
<i>ukuba namehlo azigobhe</i>	to be very sickly
<i>ukuba mehlwana</i>	to be very anxious
<i>ukuhlahla amehlo</i>	to be frightened
<i>ukuhloma amehlo</i>	to be boisterous
<i>ukubakazisa amehlo</i>	to be nervous
<i>ukubheka ezinhlamvini zamehlo</i>	to be confronted
<i>ukuba nganganabasemehlweni</i>	to be as thin as the pupils in the eyes (sickly condition)
<i>amehl' amhlophe!</i>	good health!

*Izinyanga* claim that an eye can reflect any disharmony or imbalances that might occur amongst the organs of the body. They further maintain that a well-trained *inyanga* should be able to interpret the condition of the eyes by noting pigmentation changes as the pigmentation changes correspond to stages and types of inflammation.

It is often observed amongst African families that when the child looks sickly, the mother of the child or grandmother first checks its eyes. The checking is usually followed by the following comment: *unesilonda!* which literally means to have a sore. This kind of sore does not mean a skin inflammation. It refers to a certain kind of irregularity in the body system of

the child. *Isilonda* in a child is usually regarded as an indication of a low immune system. To boost the child's immune system, adults usually use a brownish- powdered herb which is called *umphuphutho* (*Graderia scabra*) as an anal suppository.

## 2.11 Nature of symptoms

Symptoms may have a variety of characteristics. Generally, illness may show itself in a variety of forms such as sweating at night, weight loss, vomiting, throbbing, burning, itching and crawling movements, etc. Any sensation may be described and located accurately. However, there are rare and peculiar symptoms that are rarely described and sometimes difficult to describe. There are also symptoms that arise with a particular illness such as AIDS. Peculiar symptoms have to be understood first before medication is dispensed.

### a) Peculiar symptoms and aromatherapy

In cases where symptoms are not easily identifiable or the patient is unable to talk about his or her illness, *izinyanga* often burn either *impepho* (incense) or *izinyamazane* (mixture of animal remains) to find out what the illness could be. *Izinyanga* claim that the scent of both *impepho* and *izinyamazane* have medicinal and therapeutic impact that has an effect on the body's hypothalamus, the part of the brain which influences the hormone system, affecting moods, metabolism, stress levels and help the body systems of patient to respond to diagnosis.

### b) Ukutshopa (pricking with needle-like substance)

The other form that *izinyanga* often use when the symptoms of illness are not clear is *ukutshopa* (pricking). The *inyanga* pricks certain parts of the body using a fine needle-like object with medicine smeared at the tip of the object to stimulate the body's energy flow, allowing the body to heal itself. This type of medication treats a wide range of conditions. It is

a technique used to treat the whole person rather than the part that might hurt. It is a holistic traditional 'injection'.

#### **2.11.1 Preparation of medicines**

*Izinyanga* devise a method of dispersing the medicine in a neutral substance by grinding or shaking it in either milk or water or any other liquid substances. Herbal medicines can also be dispensed as liquids, ointments, powders and also as suppositories.

The herbalist tries to select the most appropriate medicine based upon the understanding that each medicine has its own individual characteristics, just as each person is unique. Having selected the medicine, the next step is to determine the proper strength to use. There are many different styles of practices that may be employed. Each herbalist uses his own discretion that he is most comfortable with.

#### **2.11.2 Reactions to medicine**

##### **a) Positive reaction**

The person feels better after taking a prescription even if the signs of the chronic case are still prevailing. The sick person acquires an increased sense of well-being, shown by less emotional stress, better sleep and better attitudes.

##### **b) Negative reaction and power of moral support**

When the patient feels no difference after taking the prescription, he or she feels hopeless, desperately anxious and not knowing what to do next. The most depressing part for a sick person is when the illness heightens causing complications that the patient fails to handle. If there are in-explainable complications, the patient suffers psychological stress and



becomes vulnerable because vital life satisfactions are unavailable.

The patient feels alienated. It is at such times when an experienced *inyanga* begins to exercise his therapeutic skills, by building an empathetic bond with his patient. The *inyanga* may request the patient to stay with him for sometime so that the former can have a closer look at the well-being of his patient. One of the relatives might also be asked to stay with the patient to give him or her moral support or to be a mediator between the *inyanga* and the patient especially when the latter cannot express himself or herself properly. Being closer to the patient is for *inyanga* an attempt to help the former to stimulate the systems within the patient himself or herself that can liberate his or her own psycho-spiritual healing powers to carry him or her across the crisis.

It has been mentioned that when the patient is in a critical condition, he or she may be allowed to stay under the close eye of *inyanga*. This is another form of therapy that is also used by Zulu herbalists to relieve emotional stress and tension, relieve aches and pains and restore natural body movements as well as improving spiritual liberation. This kind of therapy can also accelerate physical and emotional healing and resolve issues held in the body to allow enhanced health, vitality, communication and improved interpersonal relationships.

## 2.12 Traditional medicine for sustainability

Nature is our mother. The good mother really cares for her children and protects them. Nature has always been the mother of all treatments which provides therapies for all sorts of illnesses and diseases. Natural vegetation nourishes our soil and shelters and sustains wild life. It also absorbs carbon dioxide and emits oxygen.

Probably, it is due to such caring nature of the Earth that made Saint Francis of Assisi, the founder of Franciscan religious orders, in his reflections called the “Canticle of the Sun” in

the 13<sup>th</sup> century honour the Earth by calling it 'Mother'. We depend on Mother Earth for our survival and quality of our health.

The province of KwaZulu-Natal with its magnificent and renowned diversity of indigenous flora and fauna is one of the richest and has the most fundamental elements of our natural heritage. It is a province that places a high value on its indigenous plants and animals, which contribute to a sense of cultural identity, spiritual enrichment and recreation. Indigenous animals and plants are not only an attraction to the tourists, they are also central aspects to our natural heritage.

However, the increasing demand for medicinal plants as well as wild animal remains have led to concerns over their sustainability. Today many medicinal plants as well as wild animals whose remains are used for medicine can be referred to as endangered. Basically, the aim of training *izinyanga* as ethnobotanists and ethnozoologist is to provide them with conservation skills or framework for the sustainable use of plant and animal parts in medicine.

The World Summit on Sustainable Development which was held in South Africa from 26 August to 4, September 2002 can be perceived as a global wake-up call for humans to start practising an ethic of sustainable use of natural resources, especially both plants and wild animals.

*Izinyanga* as practitioners who solely depend on plants and animals for the treatment of their patients have a responsibility to ensure that where medicinal plants and animals are taken from the wild, they are taken on a basis that is sustainable. *Izinyanga* need not only study the healing properties of indigenous plant and animal remains but they should also play a role in conserving knowledge about their medicinal use especially when the depletion and degradation of indigenous wildlife threatens our health-care systems and our landscape.

It is hoped that the knowledge of *izinyanga* about the use of indigenous medicines might be a valuable contribution towards the sustainability of primary health-care systems in our province, KwaZulu-Natal.

The recognition of the inherent value of indigenous medicines whose constituents are made from animal, plant and mineral remains and the need to ensure their continued survival is one aspect of Indigenous Knowledge Systems that this discussion attempted to highlight.

Since an African Renaissance is incorporated in this chapter as an integral part of the Indigenous Knowledge Systems, the following discussion therefore, considers an African Renaissance as a quest for the recognition of Africa and its values.

### **2.13 Mbeki's catch-phrase and the African Renaissance**

The word 'renaissance' is not a new word in the lexicon of developmental history. The popularity of this word in history began with the fall of the Roman Empire which was followed by the periods called the Dark Ages and the Middle Ages where people lost interest in literature, art, knowledge and development.

For the European population renaissance came with a new direction which rescued them from the stagnation and suffocation which had characterised the Dark Ages. Griggs (1998:1) maintains that for Mbeki, the South African President, the 21<sup>st</sup> century is for the African Renaissance.

Mbeki's popular catch-phrase which is the African Renaissance seems to trigger many peoples' imagination and it also makes eye-catching headlines in the media. Let us first look at the background of this catch-phrase.

Firstly, let us take note that the prestigious Decade of the World's Indigenous Peoples which was declared by the UN in 1993 is celebrated in 2004 in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. And the Indigenous Peoples of Africa are also part of this prestigious celebration.

Secondly, an idea of dedicating the 21<sup>st</sup> century to the continent of Africa goes almost simultaneously with the concept of an African Renaissance. This shows that an African-led renaissance which reflects the perspectives of the indigenous peoples of Africa is not an isolated event.

It is presumed that Mbeki adopted this catch-phrase of an African Renaissance as a way of responding or showing gratitude to the UN on behalf of the indigenous peoples of Africa for its recognition of the latter as well as their traditional knowledge systems.

Probably, Mbeki wanted to find something unique for the African continent, something that could give people new hopes and insights about Africa. It appears that Mbeki as one of the promoters of the African Renaissance adopted this catch-phrase on behalf of other African leaders as a way of telling the UN that something significant is about to come from the continent of Africa.

It also appears that African leaders have selected this term 'renaissance' as their theme, in view of the fact that they are presently in the process of implementing a policy or a plan, aimed at addressing their Indigenous Knowledge Systems which seem to be the key factor for the success of the African Renaissance. Traditional Knowledge Systems are the national heritage of Africa through which Africa can be identified.

It is also assumed that other indigenous peoples of the world may introduce their own 'labels' through which they can be identified during the celebration of this prestigious Decade. It is thought that the UN too is looking forward to seeing how the other indigenous peoples of the world will respond towards the celebration of the Decade dedicated to them.

Probably, in response to such a pressure from the UN and statesmen outside Africa, the African statesmen have seen it appropriate to claim the 21<sup>st</sup> century as the century of an African Renaissance. It is further assumed that the pressure from both the UN and statesmen outside Africa has an impact on the origin of this concept which is called an African Renaissance.

### 2.13.1 What is an African Renaissance?

“The new African world which the African Renaissance seeks to build is one of democracy, peace and stability, sustainable development and a better life for the people, non-racism and non-sexism, equality among the nations and a just and democratic system of internal governance.” (Mbeki, 1998:4)

Mbeki, in {Think Quest} (2001:1) perceives an African Renaissance as a revival for the African continent and an opportunity for Africans to free and empower themselves against the legacy of colonialism and neo-colonialism. He also hopes that this renaissance will empower Africa to help the world rediscover the oneness of the human race.

During his speech for the South African audience, Joseph (1997:2) mentioned that Kofi Annan, the UN Secretary, divides the momentous changes in South Africa in particular over the last five decades into three parts or waves. According to Kofi Annan the first wave came in South Africa with decolonisation and the struggle against apartheid.

The third wave which is now in progress in Africa generally, marks the new era. It marks the end of the second wave which was often marked by civil wars, the tyranny of military rule, and recent economic stagnation.

Probably, for Kofi Annan this new era implies the celebration of the prestigious Decade by indigenous peoples of Africa. It might also be referring to the concept which Mbeki and the other African statesmen have given a name of an African Renaissance.

A catch-phrase of an African Renaissance often used by Mbeki does not necessarily give an African Renaissance the same stand as the one of the 16<sup>th</sup> century because the so called African Renaissance is almost 18 months old. As result, it is also inappropriate to compare the two. However, it must not be understood as if one says Africans may not experience a quality renaissance. The point here is that a renaissance is a broad concept with complex aspects which might not be dealt with within a short space of time. This is a mission that might take the peoples of Africa a long way to freedom.

Holding high hopes about a renaissance which is a toddler and still trying to find its way out of the dark tunnel is like counting the chickens before they are hatched.

During his speech, Joseph [op.cit.: 3] advised the South African community with regard to the importance of attaining the good out of the African Renaissance.

“Renaissance is not like the Mandela magic, but the renaissance in SA is a historical moment that must be cautiously nurtured and continuously supported far into the future, rather than simply celebrated as an event in the nation’s past. What happened in 1994 was the beginning of a process and not the end of a struggle.”

Kilgour (2001:3) maintains:

“Our efforts to promote human, social and economic development is a collaborative effort. This effort coupled with an optimistic attitude will ensure that Africa, and its renaissance thrives in the new Millenium.”

### **2.13.2 Initiatives to support the African Renaissance**

Since the declaration of the Decade of indigenous peoples by the UN, the leaders of the African continent have made a strong stand. In the first year of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Africa took

two historic decisions as it created the African Union and established the New Partnership for Africa's development (NEPAD) as means of unifying the inhabitants of Africa. Both the African Union and the NEPAD look like two supportive pillars on which the African Renaissance can be built. The NEPAD in particular seems to be the right-hand of the African Renaissance as it deals mainly with the continent's economic plan.

The highly developed countries of Europe, which are also known as the G8, have also acknowledged the initiatives of the African leaders. The G8 are engaged in a comprehensive, emphatic and expeditious manner to support Africa's development challenges. As a result, in June 26, 2002, the G8 together with the members of NEPAD, various economics academics and African NGO's held a conference in Canada to discuss matters concerning the partnership between the European Union and the African states as a point of departure for Africa's support.

The NEPAD together with the G8 focus on the economic development side of Africa as a means to attain sustainable resources for the toddling renaissance which faces multiple development challenges. It appears that the African leaders are aware that without stable economic resources, the African Renaissance may not reach its goal. The NEPAD is meant to be the backbone of the African Renaissance initiatives. The Foreign Affairs Minister Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma (2002:1), addressing a symposium titled "The G8 and African Renewal" held as a preliminary to the G8 Summit at the University of Alberta, outlined the concept of the NEPAD:

"The NEPAD concept, was bound for success as it had been born of African nations themselves on realisation of a need to respond to their development challenges."

The NEPAD might eventually succeed. At present its success may not be guaranteed on the basis that it is an African-led concept. Zuma seems to be building castles in the air because she prejudices history. Her absolute confidence about the success of NEPAD which

is not even two years old is frightening.

#### 2.14 Which one will survive?

A number of organisations have been established in Africa, all with an aim of integrating African countries in the economic, social and cultural fields. This objective of an integration of African countries was concretised in the Charter of the OAU in 1963. In 1980 the OAU Extraordinary Summit adopted the Lagos Plan of Action, as a major step towards co-operation and integration amongst African countries. During that summit, the African leaders stated their commitment, individually and collectively, to promote the economic integration and the social development of Africa, thus paving the way for the establishment of the African Economic Community. {AEC Document, 2002:1}

In 1912 the African National Congress was born. The primary objective of this congress was to see Africans united in the fight against the colonial discriminatory rule. In the 1960's Africans shared the pride of the Pan African Congress which was promoted by Kwame Nkrumah, the late president of Ghana. He also had a vision about a united Africa with a title of the 'united states of Africa'.

Within the 18 months of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the African leaders have established the African Union, African Renaissance and the NEPAD. *Abantu abayi ngandawonye bengamanzi.* (People do not go along the same route like water) Critics will ask: which of these African organisations will actually survive and unite Africa? Africa is still ravaged by endless traumatic wars, ethnic violence, coups, genocide, drug-trafficking, unstable governance, child abuse, rape of women, and the rapid spread of HIV/Aids. For some countries, an African Renaissance is a mirage because they still believe that Africa is still a 'Dark Continent'.

Kofi Annan in {Allafrica} (2002:1) explained to the UN's development conference in



Monterrey, Mexico on 23 March what development is:

“Development means enabling people to escape a ‘vicious’ circle of ‘multiple hardships... poverty, hunger, disease, oppression, conflict, pollution, depletion of natural resources.’”

## 2.15 The continuous tumult in the politics of Africa

Africa may not escape criticism if she does not turn a new leaf. Odendaal (1998:1) states:

“ The prevalence of ethnic conflict and its consequences are particularly severe in Africa. Kofi Annan, Secretary-General of the United Nations, has stated that since 1970 more than 30 wars have been fought in Africa, the vast majority of them intra-state in origin. In 1996 alone, 14 of the 53 countries of Africa were afflicted by armed conflicts, accounting for more than all of war-related deaths world-wide and resulting in more than 8 million refugees, returnees and displaced persons”

The genocide of both Rwanda and Burundi which is often referred to as the 100 days of slaughter which shocked the world, reached its climax with the death of Rwandan President Habyarimana and the Burundian President who were shot near Kigali Airport. War-torn Angola for 27 years is still in the headlines. Some think that with the death of Savimbi, the leader of UNITA, the opposition party in Angola will soon enjoy lasting peace. But true peace and bloodshed do not normally go together. It is temporary peace that Angola seems to be enjoying at present because the followers of Savimbi might soon take revenge for the death of their leader.

The Democratic Republic of the Congo has lost its president, Lawrence Kabila through bloodshed. There is still turmoil in the DRC because Joseph Kabila who is now the present president was not voted for in democratic elections.

From March to April 18 in 2002 the members of the New Partnership for Africa's

Development (NEPAD) and other stakeholders were holding talks at Sun City about the pressing issues of the Democratic Republic of the Congo with the hope of finding the foundation for the democratic government.

Zimbabwe's national elections are controversial. The Commonwealth does not see Zimbabwe's 2002 elections as free and fair. It also does not recognise Mugabe as the legitimate president of Zimbabwe. As a result, Mugabe has been given a red card by the Commonwealth. The global community is watching what is next for Zimbabwe. Probably, continuous political conflict might follow.

Zimbabwe is a member of the African Union and NEPAD. Olusanjo Obasanjo as the chairman of the NEPAD has the heavy responsibility of putting Mugabe onto track before he discredits the respectability of the African Union, the NEPAD and the African Renaissance.

Kilgour [op.cit:2] comments about Ghana's election. From Kilgour's point of view the inauguration of President Kufour in Accra was a peaceful transition of authority which had no fears and threats during the elections. Kilgour describes such an election as a beacon of hope which all the other African leaders should strive for, not only for themselves but moreover for the success of the African continent.

## **2.16 The two choices for the African people**

Mbeki [op. cit:1]: states:

“For long our people have suffered untold hardship. For long our collective destiny has been compromised by selfish rulers.”

Such a complaint has been heard for a long time. Even during the period of transition from colonial power to African independence it is still being heard amongst the African

communities which have been previously marginalised. It appears that this complaint will still be preached vigorously to the coming generations in the African soil because it is believed that Africa has been unjustly robbed of its dignity, prosperity and property.

Strangely enough when there are ethnic wars, political violence and diseases, especially the HIV/Aids pandemic, some of the African people are often heard pushing the blame far away from them with an intention of finding someone else to be a scapegoat.

Complaints of this kind make one wonder if African peoples have grown up in a habit of finding a third party to blame for things they themselves fail to handle appropriately or responsibly? Is this pointing of fingers at other people by some of African people still an effect of colonialism and apartheid? If so, here is a significant question for them: *is this attitude or tendency healing the wounds of the past?*

An African Renaissance is not just an event but a given task and an era of two choices for the indigenous Africans. This African Renaissance is here and now, and now is when indigenous Africans can make a life-time choice.

The first choice is for the indigenous Africans to continue reminiscing about the miseries of the past caused by colonial powers and their discriminating forms of governments such as apartheid. The second choice imposes a heavy responsibility on the shoulders of Africans who have claimed this century as an era of their renaissance.

Simply speaking, indigenous peoples of Africa are faced with a huge responsibility which is contained in the following short sentence: Africa, restart it all. This restart means repairing the damaged self-esteem of Africa, re-organising the governance of the African states, re-establishing stable economies, renewing an image of Africa, and renewing attitudes of Africans towards other nationalities, etc.

Reshaping the African continent is a heavy responsibility for both leaders and ordinary civil society. It is vital that Africans free themselves of the limited perceptions of the past and embark on programmes that enhance global development.

There are many re-'s which African peoples can think of during the process of rebuilding Africa. An African Renaissance is about African people facing reality about themselves and their way of life. It is about finding means and methods of giving birth to a new Africa whose inhabitants are eager to sacrifice themselves for the sake of development in a peaceful continent.

Probably, an agenda for the recognition and development of Indigenous Knowledge Systems by both national and international communities might be the most fitting context for the African Renaissance as the latter appears to be an integral part of this endeavour. Why? The African Renaissance is an era of the remaking or regeneration Africa and its values, *ubuntu* being one of these values. This means that the issue of the recognition and development of Indigenous Knowledge Systems and the concept of an African Renaissance might be dealt with synoptically.

Indigenous peoples of Africa are still faced with a huge challenge which involves developing strategies and measures that could be explored as means of putting their renaissance in the spotlight as a major item in the agenda for the promotion of the Indigenous Knowledge Systems in Africa for example, through the strengthening of *ubuntu* (humaneness) values which we are going to talk about in the following discussion as a means to consolidate the collective nation-building that promotes a self-realisation through others.

#### **2.17 *Ubuntu* (Humaneness) empowers all to be valued in order to reach their full potential in accord with all around them**

“ The one thing that transcends language, or the outward expressions of culture, our physical appearance, our age or sex, belief, is the values

that we cherish and live by, values that give meaning to our individual and social relationships even our solitary spiritual journeys and our intellectual and imaginative excursions.” (James, 2001:10)

*Ubuntu* is a value and a norm which is greatly cherished by African people. As a result, it is one of the values which have been carried down from the traditional times up to the present one. If one takes the following statement into consideration it appears that *ubuntu* is still considered as the most cherished value which human beings can share in a global context. Teffo in Louw (1995:6) states:

“ The ethos of *ubuntu*... is one single gift that African philosophy can bequeath on other philosophies of the world.”

This statement can make the people of Africa think about a suitable place for bequeathing this prestigious gift of their continent in order to be shared with other peoples outside the African continent.

But where is this *ubuntu* supposed to be found in a human being?

#### 2.17.1 *Umuntu* (A human being) in the inside of a person

“The Bantu philosophy divides the human being into two beings: the outside, which exists from the presence of the inside being and the inside, which gives life and shape to the outside. The inside is also understood to be the heart—the center [sic] of human personality, feelings, thoughts and human will. This is the center [sic] of human values” {The ‘Concept of *ubuntu*’, 2001:1}

According to this division it appears that the outside which is the physiological make-up of a person is only a shell that covers the actual self which is in the inside. The inside is the actual core of *umuntu* (a human being). The inside is also the centre of life-styles cherished by society. It is in this inside self where *ubuntu* (humaneness) is believed to reside. It is also here where *ubuntu* is said to be nurtured prior to its manifestation on the outside.

*Inswelaboya* (literally, that which lacks fur, hair) is one of the words that people often use to refer to individuals who murder others or do anything extremely antisocial in the community due to the fact that they do not adhere to their inner-selves. If people say that *usibanibani yinswelaboya*, they mean that so and so is an animal in all respects except that he or she does not grow hair on his or her body as most animals do. In other words such a person behaves in an extremely unacceptable manner. About such an individual some people simply say: *usibanibani akasiyena umuntu* which literally means that so and so is not a human being. Such a person can also be referred to as an animal because the opposite of a human being is an animal.

For an individual to be called *umuntu* it is important that that particular individual allows himself or herself to be directed and guided by the inner-self in order to behave responsibly amongst his or her fellow beings. Secondly, for an individual to be respected as a human being by his or her fellow beings he or she has first to show certain characteristics that make him or her *umuntu* (a human being).

If the following aphorism is taken into consideration it appears that to be *umuntu* who is directed by the inside, *umuntu* himself or herself should take the initiative to face the challenges and responsibilities that are involved with being a responsible *umuntu*. To encourage humane behaviour the Northern Sotho (Sepedi) say:

“*Feta kgomo o tshware motho.*” (Ramose, 1999:1)

This literally means that if one is faced with a decisive choice between wealth and the preservation of the life of another human being, then one should opt for the preservation of life.

This aphorism leaves us with an impression that for one to acquire the characteristics of being a humane human being, one needs to be imbued with a spirit which embodies the

concept of mutual understanding and appreciation of the value of the life of other human beings. It appears that being *umuntu* (a humane being) is an honour and a value in itself that one has to achieve by listening to one's inner-self.

*Ubuntu* and *umuntu* with humane qualities seem to complement each other because *umuntu* with integrity is also said to have *ubuntu*. Being *umuntu* (a humane being) and being characterised as a person with *ubuntu* are qualities mostly desired by any person. But what is *ubuntu*?

The following discussion sets out to examine what *ubuntu* from an African perspective implies.

#### 2.17.2 Definition of *ubuntu* concept

“(Ubuntu is an expression which has its origin in the concept of *umuntu* — human being.” ‘The concept of *ubuntu*’, [op.cit:1]

Joseph (1999:1) maintains that *ubuntu* is an expression which cannot be explained in a single way.

Although there is not a single definition of *ubuntu* as Joseph maintains, attempts to define or explain what *ubuntu* is have been made by various people from different disciplines. Mandela, the ex-president of South Africa asked during an interview what *ubuntu* is, answered:

“*ubuntu* means humanity- to be human – compassionate – to be able to put yourself in the place of the other, especially those vulnerable in society.” (Martha Simmons, 1999:1)

*Ubuntu* appears as a concept that embodies kindness and dedication to working for the benefit of humanity.

“*Ubuntu* is a concept with four components which are: the quality and

dignity of all people; an emphasis on humanness and brotherhood of mankind and the sacredness of life. Finally, it is seen as the 'most desirable state of human life'." (February, 2001:1)

The above definitions describe *ubuntu* as defined in terms of an individual and his or her relationship with others, his or her allegiances to those around him or her. Taking these definitions into consideration together with an African thought with regard to *ubuntu*, it appears that *ubuntu* is primarily based on the opposite of being selfish and self-centred. Its concerns are about the promotion of co-operation between individuals, cultures and nations.

It can also be said that *ubuntu* is a versatile African concept which encapsulates universal values pertinent to human relationships, human dignity, human development, communal ethos, solidarity, consensus, rule of law, respect, peace and reconciliation.

*Ubuntu* appears to be an integral part of value-systems, leading to communal responsibility and communal sharing as a means to sustain values of living a communal life and healthy social relationships.

### 2.17.3 **A spirit of mutual support**

The Christian expression says that faith without good works is dead. This expression tells us that one who has faith has also an obligation to share it with others, either in the form of good deeds or spiritual support. Faith that cares for others is the faith that can be said to be alive. Faith is a life-giving virtue if it is well-shared. One who has faith should strive to lead others to life eternal. A person with *ubuntu* seems to have almost the same obligation of sharing this *ubuntu* with other people to achieve sustainable peace.

If the following aphorism and maxim are consecutively taken into consideration it appears that there is no person who is self-sufficient. And there is no man who is an island. We need



each other:

a) The Northern Sotho say:

1. *Motho ke motho ka batho.* (A human being is a human being because of other human beings)
2. *Kgosi ke kgosi ka batho.* (A king is a king through his people)

b) The Xhosa say:

1. *Umntu ngumntu ngabantu.* (a human being is a human being because of other human beings)
2. *Inkosi inkosi ngabantu.* (A king is a king through his people)

c) The Zulu say:

1. *Umntu ngumntu ngabantu.* (A human being is a human being because of other human beings)
2. *Inkosi yinkosi ngabantu.* (A king is a king through his people)

Ramose [op.cit.:1] explains what the above aphorism and maxim consecutively mean from an African perspective:

“The aphorism which says: a human being is a human being because of the other human beings, means that to be human is to affirm one’s humanity by recognising the humanity of others and, on the basis, establishing respectful human relations with them...The maxim which says a king is a king through his people is a principle deeply embedded in traditional African political philosophy. This means that the king owes his status, including all the powers associated with it, to the will of the people under him.

“Being human is being-with-others.” (Louw, 1999:5) ‘Being-with-others’ is understood as the principle of caring for each other’s well- being and a spirit of mutual support. This

means that being a human being with *ubuntu* also calls one to acknowledge both the rights and the responsibilities of every citizen in promoting individual and societal well-being.

All in all it appears that active *ubuntu* means that each individual's humanity is ideally expressed through his or her relationship with others and theirs in turn through a recognition of the individual's humanity.

There are various forms of showing concern to other people that different communities adapt amongst themselves. Greeting is one of these forms in other communities as the following example will show.

#### 2.18 *Sawubona* as a reflection of concern

A human being with *ubuntu* is concerned about other human beings. This concern makes him or her find means to be continuously connected to other people in order to experience a sense of belonging or attachment. In the ethos of Zulu greeting *sawubona* (we see you) this need for continuous attachment with other people seems to be a need for both the living and the dead.

*Sawubona* has the subject concord *si-/sa-* (we). The subject concord *si-/sa-* is in a plural form. It is important to note that this subject concord *si-/sa-* is used even when it is a single person who starts the greetings. According to the grammatical construction the greeting should go thus: *ngiyakubona* (I see you) when one person starts the greeting. However, the *ngi-* (I) which is used with singular nouns is never used in this context because the Zulu believe that a person is never all alone in life. It is believed that everyone has his or her ancestors that always accompany him or her.

According to Zulu thought the *si-/sa* represents the speaker and the invisible members of his or her family who are dead. An individual who starts the greeting, greets the other together

with the community of his or her ancestors who are also believed to be accompanying or guiding him or her.

*Sawubona* is interpreted as saying: we are all concerned and we all care about your well-being as you are one of us. The first speaker becomes an instrument of his or her ancestors who want to show their continuous concern and care for other people as they used to do when they were still alive. It is also a common practice in Zulu that the two or more persons who are greeting each other extend their greetings by asking about the well-being of the other members of the families who are not in their midst during the time of greeting.

The communal *si-/sa-* enshrined in the *sawubona* appears to be a unifying vision and of the Zulu world view. This greeting also articulates a basic respect and compassion or social ethic even from the unseen beings of our community. Caring for one another is a communal and unifying ethos in an African world-view. Greeting another *umuntu* is another form of caring.

Since *sawubona* is said to involve ancestors, it also serves as the spiritual foundation of the Zulu society because it allows both communities of the living and dead keep in touch with one another.

## 2.19 **Inter-connectedness amongst caring humans**

The impact of interrelationship amongst human beings can also be identified in the kinship terms such as *udadewethu* (our sister) and *umfowethu* (our brother). The *wethu* (our) in both words, *umfo* and *udade* reminds me of the argument that came up during a Zulu lesson when one of the learners argued that she could not call her sister *udadewethu* (our sister) because the latter was the only sister she had. The learner who was arguing would prefer to call her sister *udadewami* (my sister). It had to be explained to this learner that she shared her sister with other people who are not even members of her own family. From this learner's point of

view, her sister was hers alone which empowered her to call the latter, *udadewami*.

According to the African perspective the *wethu* in both *udade* and *umfo* represents the whole community. *Udadewethu* for example, means that so and so is a daughter of the entire nation. As a daughter of the entire society, she automatically becomes a sister to every member of society. The *wethu* does not only mean she is our sister. It also means that we as *abantu* (persons) are also accountable for her well-being as she is also *umuntu* like us. *Ubuntu* calls us to share her joys and miseries. It seems as if human beings with *ubuntu* say, if so and so is not amongst us the societal register is incomplete or their social relationship is broken. And in turn an individual who is disconnected from those who make him or her an *umuntu* in the fullest feels insecure and incomplete.

## 2.20 Community places and sharing

The *wethu* (our/ours) that is suffixed to kinship nouns above is also reflected in community places that *abantu* equally share amongst themselves. Following are a few examples of these communal places:

*Kithi* (at our home/at our place) versus at my home/at my place

*Kini* (at your 'plural' home / at your place) versus at your 'singular' home/at your place

*Kubo* (at their home/ at their her place) versus at his/her home/ at his/her

*Izwe lakithi / lethu* (our country) versus my country)

Nouns referring to communal places with representative locatives such as *kithi* (our/ours) might be interpreted as saying: it is open to all or it equally belongs to everyone of us. The plural forms referring to community places also seem to tell us that what is yours is mine and what is mine is yours. This is like saying: since we share our *ubuntu* humanity we also share our possessions, properties and our country of birth.

## 2.21 South Africa, the rainbow nation and *ubuntu* concept

It is important to start by mentioning that amongst the ten fundamental values that compel transformation in the SA constitution, *ubuntu* (humaneness) stands as the core value as the following statement shows:

“In the final constitution, the drafters applied the notion of *ubuntu* by asserting that the South African state was founded, before anything else, upon the value of ‘human dignity.’ *Ubuntu* has a particularly important place in our value system for it derives specifically from African mores.” James, [op.cit.: 5]

February [op.cit.:1] states:

“*Ubuntu* is a value system which is now generally seen as the backbone of the new South Africa, a unifying philosophy in a society divided and ravaged by apartheid through its ‘philosophy’ which is reflected in African adage which says: umuntu ngomuntu [sic] (a person is a person through other people) The contribution of the ubuntu idea plays a big role to the emergence of a new culture which cuts across colour lines and to the process of reconciliation in South Africa. The enforcement and practice of the ubuntu ethos can find relevance to other countries beyond the African continent.”

It is worth mentioning that the Moral Regeneration Movement which was launched on 18 April 2002 in Pretoria also recognises *ubuntu* as the value for uniting society:

“The Moral Regeneration Movement is a framework to encourage, facilitate, sensitise and network the response in every sector of our society... Its mission is to revive the spirit of ubuntu/botho, using all the resources available in government and civil society. It is committed to establishing the values expressed in our Constitution.” (Jacob Zuma, 2002:1)

Since South Africa is referred to as the rainbow nation makes the best example as a context for the application of *ubuntu* on a wider scale. A rainbow has multiple colours which differ in their appearance. Some colours of the rainbow are brighter than others. However, this does mean that these brighter colours are more important than others. On the contrary, every colour

in the rainbow has its own significant place and role. If one colour can fade out, the rainbow cannot look magnificent as it is. Each and every colour of the rainbow needs each other for the display of grandeur of the rainbow.

In this context the rainbow represents the country, South Africa while the colours represent various ethnic groups with their diverse cultural backgrounds. Although the groups are ethnically different, they are equally represented in the country through a democratic vote. Through this democratic vote, every member in each group has a full citizenship of South Africa.

If each colour of the rainbow can be asked this question: in whose rainbow do you manifest your brilliant colour? It is thought that each colour can say: it is our rainbow which means that the rainbow is us all and ours despite our differences in colour and shining.

Let us consider the 'us' and 'our' which might be implied responses of the colours of the rainbow. Both the 'us' and 'our' are also reflected in the following words: *izwe lakithi* or *izwe lethu* (our country/ a country of ours). The *lakithi* and *lethu* which both emphasise the 'our' form are usually instilled in the mind of a growing Zulu child so that he or she grows up with a spirit of understanding that there are things that are used in common which ought to be shared in good spirit and mutual understanding.

From a Zulu point of view the reference *izwe lami* (my country) does not seem appropriate because it seems to be exclusive as it uses the possessive concord mine/ my which is in the singular form. For the Zulu, a singular form seems to highlight individualistic spirit instead of a national unity which is also highlighted in the following South Africa's official motto: "Ike e: Ixarra//ke"- which means "Unity in Diversity." James, [op.cit.:9]

Adhering to *ubuntu* could be a great challenge to South Africa with its claim of being a

rainbow nation as sustaining *ubuntu* requires a framework that can provide a context for instilling, reinforcing and nurturing the culture of social responsibility as a potentially powerful instrument of promoting and re-affirming of social values which seem to be encapsulated in the *ubuntu* concept.

## **Conclusion**

Since there is a dramatically growing national and international interest in incorporating Indigenous Knowledge in the educational systems, health systems and planning processes, grassroots networks of indigenous and rural communities for promoting Indigenous Knowledge Systems, this chapter aimed at highlighting the role of local knowledge in the international arena which in its endeavours strives to promote a holistic assessment of the links and relationships between Indigenous Knowledge Systems and the Universalised Knowledge Systems. And which is aimed at closing the gap between Indigenous Knowledge Systems and the Universalised Knowledge Systems.

An African Renaissance and *ubuntu* concept are both integrated within a framework of Indigenous Knowledge Systems whose objectives are based on the sustainable recognition of indigenous peoples themselves as well as their local knowledge through which the latter can rediscover and empower themselves for the reconstruction of their indigenous heritage such as traditional medicine and social values which may contribute in the rebuilding of a society which is sensitive to the breakdown of moral values.

## Chapter 3

### **SEMANTICS, MEANING AND COMMUNICATION AN ART OF UNDERSTANDING AND BEING UNDERSTOOD THROUGH CRITICAL THINKING**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter deals with an analysis of language, focusing on the essence of critical thinking in the process of communication. It emphasises relationships between language and human communication. It is also concerned with revealing and understanding the linguistic unconscious, the role that language unwittingly plays in our communication and way of life.

The chapter examines the relationships between words and symbols and what words stand for. Its emphasis is on the use of words, and on what language does in a variety of contexts rather than what language is. The focus of attention is also on the essence of the addressee's or listener's role with regard to the understanding of the message sent by the speaker or addresser. Brown (2001:1) during her explorations in discourse analysis concerning speakers, listeners and communication, states:

“The listener tries to make sense of what the speaker says in a highly constrained context- to prevent or repair miscommunication- a topic of current interest in the field.”

By studying the relationship between words and the things they stand for, plus the way the speaker and listener are involved in the process of communication or act of speech, humans are able to see and think more realistically.



### **3.1 Language an instrument of communication**

Humans are born in and live in a language milieu that is tremendously influential in determining what they believe and how they act. This means that language is more than a tool for the objective description of the world, it is also used in trying to control the human perception with regard to what happens in the world.

Brown [ibid] further maintains that speakers and listeners use language collaboratively to talk about what they can see in front of them and about a series of events. Language links people with the world they live in through the transmission of thought to each other.

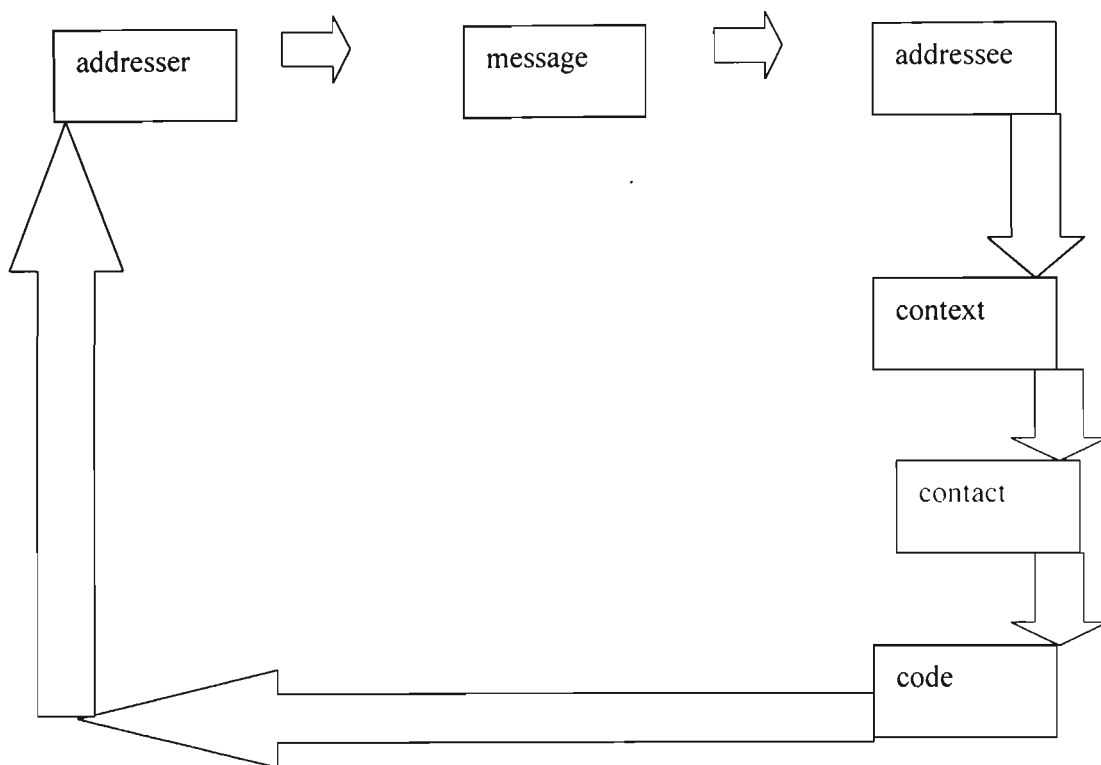
Language appears to be a significant part of what makes human beings differ from animals because humans use language as an instrument to convey their thoughts. They also use language to communicate their experiences, philosophy of life, concerns, events and their attitudes in the struggle between good and evil. A study of language increases self-understanding and promotes more effective relationships with others.

#### **3.1.1 A brief outline about Roman Jakobson**

Roman Jakobson (1896-1982) was an exceptionally renowned scholar in both literary studies and linguistics. He had a broad interest in fields such as phonology, philology, Slavic literature and folklore, aesthetics, comparative mythology, anthropology, poetry and comparative metrics, etc. Jakobson also made a considerable contribution in literary theory as well as discourse analysis. It is quite impossible to list all his works exhaustively in this outline. Accordingly, the following discussion restricts itself to one specific aspect of his work which is the communicative model and its functions.

### 3.1.2 Jakobson's model of communicative elements

Jakobson maintains that all acts of communication, be they written or oral are contingent on six constituent elements which are basic units of communication as the following model will show:



This model can be read thus: the starting point is the sender who has an intention to communicate with another person. This intention makes up the content of the message. The sender encodes the message and then gives expression to the content. The addressee/receiver decodes the incoming message or expression. In this process, the relevance of the code is a key element for the success of the message. The codes of the sender and addressee must have at least a certain set in common such as the context and contact in order to make communication work.

About the above communicative elements Hawkes in Koopman (2002:9) states:

“All communication consists of a message initiated by an addresser, whose destination is an addressee. But the process is not as simple as that. The message requires a contact between addresser and addressee, which may be oral, visual, electronic or whatever. It must be formulated in terms of a code: speech, numbers, writing, sound-formations, etc. and the message must refer to a context understood by both addresser and addressee, which enables the message to ‘make sense’...”

Let us take these six elements of communication to a Zulu context.

- Addresser/ sender/initiator: could be an older/ higher status member of the speech community such as the grandmother or the king’s representative
- Message: the moral/educational lessons might be transmitted through a proverb or idiom or folktale.
- Addressee/ receiver: a younger/low status member of the speech community becomes the target of the sender.
- Context: situation perceived by older member of the conversation as being an appropriate point for delivering a moral/educational message.
- Contact: a contact between the speaker and addressee is made through a conversation. Such a contact could be oral or visual.
- Code: the focus is on the code itself, that is on the language speaking of itself, its purpose being to clarify the manner in which the Zulu language, proverbs, proverbial phrases, aphorisms, ‘folk wisdom’, ‘oral lore’ is used to transmit the message.

Jakobson and Bühler (2002:1) point out that a common code is not sufficient for the communicative process. A function is necessary from which the object of communication is drawn.

### 3.1.3 Bühler's system of communicative functions

According to Bühler [ibid] there are three main functions of language which are: representation, expression and appeal. A communicative function is then attributed to each act of communication. Bühler explains that when the focus is on the sender, we speak of the expressive function of communication. When the focus is on the objects, the function is representative. The third function refers to communication where the focus is on the receiver. This function is called appeal.

### 3.1.4 Jakobson's model of communicative functions

Jakobson [ibid] extended Bühler's system of communicative functions by allocating a communicative function to each of the above components.

- a) The emotive function focuses on the addresser and resembles Bühler's expressive function. The addresser's own attitude towards the content of the message is emphasised. What comes from the sender reflects his or her own emotions to the topic of his or her discourse.

Examples are emphatic speech or interjections such as: *mehlo madala!* (long time not seeing, you). Such words of the addresser also bear a remarkable stress as they convey the feeling of excitement the addresser has at seeing his or her old friend whom he or she has not seen for a long time.

- b) The conative function is allocated to the addressee. As the second person the addressee is privileged to receive the informational content of an utterance sent by the addresser. The involvement of the second person in a discourse virtually eliminates the focus on the speaker or addresser as it is the latter's turn to engage in a discourse through a response to the message sent to him or her.

- c) The referential function refers to the context. This function is also emphasising that communication is always dealing with something contextual aspect, what Bühler called representative. An older person may see the need for teaching young people basic social values such as generosity, diligence and good manners. He or she may highlight his or her point by using a specific proverb which he or she may find relevant for that particular context. For example,
- to encourage young people to be diligent, an adult may use the following proverb: *imbila yaswel' umsila ngokulayezela* (the dassie is without a tail having sent others for it). This proverb is used when one is disappointed at the service rendered by other people which he should have done the work himself or herself.
  - to encourage generosity: *ikhoth'eyikhothay' engayikhoth' iyayikhaba* (it [a beast] licks the one that licks it, but kicks the one that does not lick it). Expect to be repaid in kind, that is, kindness with kindness, harshness with harshness.
  - to encourage good manners: *ihlonipha laph' ingeyukwendela khona* (the girl pays respect even where she will not marry). Good manners are necessary everywhere, not only where there might be a vested interest.
- d) The phatic function helps to establish contact and refers to the channel of communication. For example, when a girl sends her lover a string of beads made of both green and white colours the latter understands his girlfriend as saying, through the white colour.: “ *Nguwe kuphela obusa inhliziyo yami. Lonke uthando lwami olumsulwa ngilubekele wena*” (You are the only one who reigns in my heart and my love is still kept pure and intact for you alone).

Seeing the green colour the addressee may also code the message as saying: “*Ngiyafa*

*isizungu. Buya bo!*” (I am pining for you. Please, come back lest loneliness kills me.)

- e) The metalinguistic function deals with the code itself. This is the function of language about language because we also use language to examine the code. The metalinguistic function is often predominant in questions like, “Excuse me, what did you say about your new cell-phone number? ” Here the code is misunderstood and needs clarification.
- f) The poetic function is allocated to the message. Messages convey more than the content. They always contain a creative element made by participants in a discourse with a purpose of adding some spice in a message. Figures of speech such as metaphor, alliterations and repetitions are some aspects of the poetic function that are often used to form such a creative touch. These poetic elements are predominant even in sport-fields amongst football fans in particular. When fans of a particular club want to motivate or impress each other during a soccer match, they use the most popular slogans of their club. For example, when a Pirate’s striker scores a goal, the fans stand up, shout and shake hands with each other saying: “Once a Pirate always a Pirate!”

Sundowns’ fans may be heard saying: “The sky is the limit!” as if saying, more goals ‘boys’. The stadium usually resounds with echoes when the Chiefs’ captain raises up the trophy after a win. It seems as if everyone in the stadium is singing a unison saying: *Amakhosi! Abafana bokuthula noxolo!* (The Chiefs! The Boys of serenity and peace!). Such expressions send an inspirational message to both players and fans of the particular club.

Alfred Korzybski whose theory will be examined in the following discussion seems to hold the same convictions with Jakobson that a successful communication act is the one that is well-shared between the communicator and the receiver because the basic unit of

communication is not the message per se but the sharing of the message with understanding between the communicator and receiver.

### 3.2 **An outline of theoretical basis of General Semantics**

About some 50 years ago, Alfred Korzybski, a Polish mathematician and engineer, formulated or designed a theory and method which gave a means of proper evaluation whenever language is used. The body of data and method leading to habits of adequate language-fact relationships he called General Semantics.

As a scientist he believed that as scientists are able to use words so accurately that they enable them to build bridges and erect giant superstructures, he maintained that words may equally provide a clue to help the language analysts to evaluate language more efficiently and accurately to achieve understanding and agreement.

Korzybski's system, concerned with accuracy and predictability, must be considered as something different in emphasis from the pursuits of the following semanticists:

1. linguists who seek to study the history of the changes of meaning of individual words in our language
2. anthropologists who study the grammatical and syntactical make-up of language of different people, the lexicographers who chart the ways individual words have been used
3. logicians who emphasise the problem of verbal coherence and the avoidance of inconsistency within discourse
4. rhetoricians who work to discover the ways of using words for their effect in influencing attitudes and actions together with the techniques of expression by which to achieve clarity and harmony.

General semantics differs from these in that its emphasis is on the effectiveness of human communication.

“ General semantics deals with the process of how we get information and what risks, distortions, and errors take place as this process occurs. It is the study of communication in the broad sense: how people communicate with their physical environment, with themselves, and with other people. It includes how [they] perceive, how they behave, how they use symbols, and how they operate in social institutions.” (Payne in Wanderer, 1999:5)

It is a science and art of understanding and being understood. It helps people to gather information more accurately, evaluate it more clearly, judge it more soundly, and act upon it more successfully. Minter in Wanderer (1999:3) states:

“General semantics provides a method of studying the part language plays in human affairs. It emphasizes the effectiveness of human communication in (1) the awareness of all the all-pervasive character of language in daily affairs, (2) the habit of looking to language as a possible clue to some of our misunderstandings and conflicts, and (3) an appreciation of the scientific method and a consideration of applying it to language.”

General Semantics can be considered as a system that sets out standards for very high order of critical awareness and evaluating in a communication which is based on shared understanding.

### **3.3 Effects of absolute propositions in interpretations**

Pulman (2002:6) states:

“ The tradition in semantics has been to assume that word meanings can by and large simply be plugged in to semantic structures. This is a convenient and largely correct assumption when dealing with structures like X is P.”

Hausser (2002:1) notices some difficulties with the use of absolute proposition:



“ If the goal of semantics is to characterise truth, then one may use only logical meanings which are presupposed to be immediately obvious and eternal. On this approach the speaker-hearer must be part of the model structure. Thereby, the relation of truth between expressions and states of affairs exist independently of whether it is discovered by this or that speaker-hearer, or not.”

Absolute propositions express scientific or mathematical contents. For example,  $2+2=4$ , the circumstances of the utterance have no influence on the interpretation and the truth-value of the sentence in question, for which reason it is ignored. The special properties of absolute propositions are reflected in logical truth which is based on the notion of true or false.

Hausser argues that in order for the meanings of language to be used in communication by the speaker-hearer they must be part of cognition. Therefore, the analysis of natural language meanings within logical semantics leads necessarily to a reinterpretation of the model structures as something cognitive which is part of the speaker-hearer. According to Hausser contingent propositions can only be interpreted and evaluated with respect to their truth value if the relevant circumstances of the utterance situation are known and systematically entered into the interpretation.

Pulman [op.cit.:6] states:

“The relevant semantic properties of individual words or groups of words are seldom to be found in conventional dictionaries... Recent work in semantics has shifted emphasis away from the purely sentence-based approach, but the extent to which the interpretations of individual sentences can depend on dialogue or text settings, or on the goals of speakers, is much greater than had been suspected.”

Contingent propositions seem to be relevant options that can open a way for multiple interpretations in the analysis of the language to reach the most possible meaning of the utterance as the following discussion sets out to highlight. Contingent propositions require that the parameters of origin be known, that the location, the time the person of the speaker,

and the person addressed rather than absolute truth propositions which are always based on either true or false.

### 3.4 Communication as shared understanding

“The fundamental problem in the study of discourse is that of the commonality or sharing of the code between sender and receiver on which the exchange of messages is based.” (Jakobson in Celso, 1998:1)

The coding process is concerned with the intentions about the communication of the sender's notional representations which are coded into sets of signals. These sets of signals are not decoded. What makes things harder for the interlocutors is that codes are coded again by the receiver into his or her own notional representations of the sender's intent. For example, if the addresser says: *iwe ngophondo*. (it [beast] has fallen by its horn), the receiver of the message is expected to understand that the addressee is making an appeal for help. This proverb is the code.

The other thing which seems to cause problems in sharing a code is that a speaker and hearer use not only different codes, but also codes of a different nature which can be linguistic or cultural commonalties or differences to explain both understanding and misunderstanding during a communicative act.

Celso [op.cit.:3] divides the codes into three categories:

- Situational codes that deal with the signaling of our understanding of a given social context and of our intentions about social identification
- Activity codes which are procedures that organise the signaling of intentions about whatever discursive activity is being carried out
- Speech-act codes which operate directly over specific illocutionary intentions such as

requests and commands

These types of codes work simultaneously and dynamically with whatever signaling resources humans have. Dunn (1999:1) states: “ Communication is a dynamic process with the interacting components of sending, receiving and feedback.” An element of interaction links the speaker to the receiver of the message in a process of communication.

“I beg your pardon” is an expression which is used by the receiver of communication to indicate to the sender of information that the message was not well-received. A request for the repeat of the message by the receiver shows that the former does not feel being part of the communication process because it is only the communicator or sender who still knows what kind of information the receiver is supposed to have received. This break of communication seems to worry the receiver. It could be the reason why the receiver asks for a repeat of the message so that he or she may equally participate in the communication process.

There are times when the receiver does not say explicitly that he or she does not share the information. In such cases the receiver of information may use body language such as nodding the head or frowning or being silent as an indication that he or she is not understanding the message. These body signs usually leave the sender of the message with a question such as: why does he or she not understand? Is the message beyond her comprehension or language ability, or has he or she a certain attitude towards me?

This means that for our communication to be successful we first need to consider certain aspects such the intellectual ability, motives, perception, cultural background and personality of the receiver to avoid comments such as: does he or she understand me? This often indicates a break down or misunderstanding of communication.

One may argue that the sender may not be held accountable if the receiver of a message does not understand it because the sender has done his or her part well. The message has been sent

through. A successful communicative act needs to have three dimensions which are: the initiator of the message, the message itself and the receiver of a message. That is, the initiator sends a message which has to be appropriately understood by the receiver.

### 3.5 **Consciousness of abstracting and labeling**

Words work as instruments of the intentions of the speaker. What is noticed or highlighted about an object or event depends upon one's background environment and intentions. This means that two persons cannot respond the same way towards a command or an order even if they are given the same label to respond to. The word or label 'rest' is going to be used as an example in the following scenario:

There was a person sleeping in a dormitory. While this person was still sleeping two people came in and started chatting in a loud voice. The person who was sleeping showed his head out a little from the blanket and then shouted: 'rest!' with his finger pointing towards the word 'rest!' which was written in bold on a huge notice- board.

Here are results of what happened when the two people heard the command 'rest!'

1. After hearing the command, the first speaker got into the bed.
2. After hearing the command, the second speaker sat on a chair next to the bed of his friend.
3. The two continued to talk and giggle.

From the responses of the two persons it is learnt that for the first person, to sit down implied 'rest' while for the second person sleeping was the same as resting. The person who had given an order meant to tell the two persons who were making noise in the bedroom that he needed to have a 'rest!' because he was tired.

Unfortunately, the person who was sleeping did not notice that the two people he was speaking to were blind. They could not read the sign 'rest' that was written on the board to which the person commanding was pointing at to remind the two of the rule of silence in the dormitory.

As a result, the two focused on what the label 'rest' could mean at that point in time. It did not come into their minds that 'rest' on the notice-board as well as the word 'rest' itself pronounced by the speaker meant silence because the two continued to talk even when they were 'resting' at their places. They were not aware that the speaker meant to remind them that the dormitory was meant only for those who wanted to rest in their beds.

Probably, the two people were new or were not familiar with the rules of that dormitory which could be the reason why they responded differently. In that case, the speaker should have made attempts to make himself much clearer.

In this context it appears that the misinterpretation was mainly caused by the fact that the two people focused on the meaning of the word rather than what the speaker meant or intended. This means that our own words may need much clarification to prevent misinterpretation. The speaker could have said to the two: please, be quiet because I want to rest. Secondly, he or she could have said: the word 'rest' on the notice-board means absolute silence in the dormitory.

### **3.6 Distinguishing between the symbol and the actual thing**

When we apply a word to an object or event in nature we are not designating what the thing is, the word is used only as a symbol. Sometimes we react to words as if they were the thing itself because words are powerful symbols that can produce striking imagery and pleasant associations as the following examples might show:

a) A pleasant association

*Inja iyawaqeda amanzi ngolimi* (The dog finishes water licking it with its tongue). This proverb shows that people admire the dog's skill of licking water with its little tongue. It is a great skill that humans seem to envy. This act makes humans conclude that the dog is patient because it can persevere or endure the amount of time it spends licking water with its tiny tongue.

If a person is encouraged to be patient he or she is always reminded of this proverb. However, the value of patience that the dog shows during an act of licking does not make the dog patience itself. The dog only serves a sign- point towards the virtue of patience. The dog resembles a sign-post on the road which shows us a direction towards our destination.

b) A symbol of threat

Let us imagine someone cries out inside the White House in America shouting: Bin Laden!

It is unlikely that after hearing this name there can be a single person who can still be found sitting and relaxing. It is thought that people might even forget to inquire how Bin Laden managed to get inside. Some may not even wait for the FBI to catch him. Apparently, many might rush towards the place where the screaming voice came from to find out if Bin Laden himself is there in order to kill him with their own hands. Why? It is thought that people in the house associated the name Bin Laden with terrorist acts. As a result, his presence in the White House means insecurity and death because he is associated with the terrorists that blew the two World Trade centres to ashes on 11 September 2001. Therefore, anything associated with the name Bin Laden has something to do with terror especially in America. His name represents dreadful fear and fright.

Let us consider this. A person who was shouting did not say whether Bin Laden was inside the White House or was found dead. The voice could have been saying rejoice America because your bitter enemy has been found dead together with all his right-hand followers. It could have been another person called by this name, Bin Laden.

The chaotic reactions that were found in the White House were caused by the fact that people in the house associated the name Bin Laden with terrorism. They did not distinguish between the name Bin Laden and terror.

There is no written guarantee which states that as long as Bin Laden lives, he will always attack America. Even if he was practically involved in the terrorist act on September 11, he might still repent and start living a holy life. People in the house forget that a word does not mean the thing itself. Neither terrorism nor the name Bin Laden is Bin Laden himself. The two words only point towards the man called Bin Laden.

No matter how much words influence our behaviour and reaction, they still remain symbols and not the things they represent. This means that to avoid or to prevent unnecessary hurt and precipitous actions, it is safe to distinguish the actual thing from its symbol.

### **3.7 A selection of features**

A person may use the following comment about the Brazilian team:

The Brazilian team was good.

This comment about the Brazilian team does not tell us explicitly when, where and how the team was good. It is assumed that for this person the Brazilian team was good in the way it played during the 2002 World Cup because it won. But this sentence does not say it all about

the Brazilian team whether it was good in scoring goals or in maintaining the team spirit or because none of the players received a red card.

It may happen that the speaker was cut off by someone before he or she could finish his or her sentence. The speaker's full message in mind could have been: during 1998 World Cup the Brazilian team was good but they lost three nil to France.

The speaker could have gone on to explain why they lost. He could have given us more of the negative features of the team that led to its loss. We can draw a long list of qualities about the Brazilian team which the speaker could have given us. We can have an infinite set of such qualities. Words cannot cover all there is to be observed about an object or event. This means that words do not give finality in their description. They give the most possible selection of features about the object or event.

The concept of non-finality with words in description is open to leave room for more features to be added on in the process to come in the future when the need arises.

### **3.8 Time-binding: consciousness**

Humans are time conscious which make them live within the tri-circle modes of tenses which are the past, present and future. These three tenses seem to help humans to know where they come from, where they are and where they are going. The more one understands the past, the better one can appreciate the present because it is impossible to fully appreciate one's modern lifestyle without an understanding of the aesthetics of the past.

Our concern about the past makes oral literature more than a communication in words, it is a communication with our past which is drawn from the traditional repertoire handed down through generations.



Oral literature helps us to understand the historical events which have shaped a nation. It also places us in contact with a very rich and traditional vocabulary, and the artistic use of language.

### 3.9 Process and change: time-fixing

*Indod' ifeI' ezinkomeni zayo* (A man dies with his cattle). During traditional times the measure of a man's wealth and status was the number of his cattle. A man would do anything to protect his cattle as they were the basic resource for his family because they provided milk, meat, clothing and manure, etc. The above proverb referring to cattle may need long explanation for people whose economic system is based on something completely different.

Proverbs are culture-specific as they reflect the way of life of a particular community and age. Their meaning might be lost in a society whose economy, or social structure, is quite different from that of the group under investigation.

The introduction of the following saying: a man's cattle are in the bank indicates a change of people's perception about the value of cattle. A man's focus has moved away from the value of cattle to the value of money. People also say money talks which means that as long as one has got money, one has everything which money can buy. This could be the reason why the 'bank-cattle' have stolen the hearts of many amongst the Nguni people.

This change indicates that the Nguni people of the 21<sup>st</sup> century do not see things the same way as their ancestors used to in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Life has changed, as nothing is exactly the same from one day to the next.

What we know about anything or anybody must be placed in the context of time as our ideas

and perception need to remain open to the inevitable changes. This change in the perception of people as well as change of time has an impact on the meaning because it is context-bound.

### **Conclusion**

This chapter examined the ways in which a better understanding of the communication process can improve an individual's judgement and reasoning ability. It was concerned with human evaluation skills regarding communication processes. It also looked at the relationship between meaning and the reactions people have to the world of words and other symbols that language often uses.

## Chapter 4

### ORALITY, ORALNESS AND ORAL KNOWLEDGE: PROVERBS WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF ZULU ORAL LITERATURE

#### Introduction

This chapter is basically based on Ong's theory (1982) that traditional setting provides the primary milieu in which oral literature thrives best. Primary orality is intrinsic to language development and central to human social relationships in oral culture because communication is accomplished mainly through an oral system.

This chapter further looks at proverbs as figures of speech that are meant to be vehicles of the oral society's precepts through either warning, caution, satire, advise, counsel, and any other roles for which proverbs are acclaimed.

Proverbs as a social phenomenon as well as a form of communication also play an important role as facilitators of speech. They share the oral heritage and persist as a golden oral thread long after a language has been reduced to writing and its speakers have become literate because they also play a significant role in the adornment of language in a literate communication.

#### 4.1 General overview of Ong's book: "Orality and Literacy" (1982)

Ong devotes part of his discussion to a brief account of studies done by Milman Parry, Albert B. Lord and Erick Havelock on the characteristics of oral cultures. Lord carried through and extended Parry's work with convincing finesse, reporting on lengthy field trips and massive taping of oral performances by Serbo-Croatian epic singers and lengthy interviews with these singers.

Ong, in his book Orality and Literacy (1982:139) focuses on the subject matter of how the shift from primary orality to literacy dramatically changes the way humans think and how this shift affects the language itself. His approach to the subject is both synchronic in that he looks at cultures that co-exist at a certain point in time, and diachronic in that he discusses the change of human mind from being oral-based to chirographic which began with the appearance of script. Ong refers to the electronic mode of communication which is dominated by television and telephones as secondary orality as this type of communication combines both orality and print.

Ong's book of seven chapters can be roughly divided into three parts. Ong devotes the first three chapters to thought and its verbal expression in oral culture. In the next three chapters he discusses literate thought and expression in terms of their emergence from and relation to orality. In the final chapter he suggests that in the future knowledge of the differences between orality and literacy might produce new and interesting insights into our interpretation of various kinds of literature in the field of research such as New Criticism and Formalism, Speech-act, Structuralism, etc.

All in all, for Ong neither orality nor literacy is superior.

#### **4.2 The orality of language: three phases of orality**

If one takes into consideration how Ong defines the term 'orality' in his theory, it appears that from his point of view there are three phases of orality. The first phase concerns 'oral culture' which is a term that he uses as referring specifically to people who are at an oral-based stage of consciousness, that is people who are totally unfamiliar with writing and whose communication is achieved mainly through word of mouth.

Canonici (1993:2) states:

“Tradition, from the Latin verb tradere, means to hand down, to pass on to entrust. Oral comes from the Latin word os, oris which signifies the mouth, but also the face, the expression, the attitude of the whole person.”

Taking the above explanation into consideration it can be said that originally, the term orality strictly referred to communication of peoples in primary oral cultures, those untouched by writing in any form, who only learnt either by apprenticeship, or listening or repeating what they heard.

Zulu society is an example of many of the societies that can be referred to as amateurs in the world of writing, as writing in this society was introduced by missionaries towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

The second phase concerns societies whose languages are commonly used in their respective communities but have not yet been committed to writing in the true sense of the word. The reason for these languages not to develop is not always caused by the situation that the people who speak them are illiterate.

What usually happens in such societies is that people in these societies often communicate through foreign languages that have so developed in a way that in almost every discipline a reasonable amount of literature from these languages is found in a written form for people to use with ease.

*IsiMpondo* (the Pondo language) will fall into this category. *IsiMpondo* is the language that is spoken by the people who live at Bizana and other parts along the south coast of KwaZulu-Natal, from Bizana down to the Umzimvubu River. During the days of Shaka, Faku was the king of the Pondos. *IsiMpondo* is still spoken in these areas but it is not yet in a written form

because children of these regions either learn Zulu or Xhosa at school. This means that the Pondo children speak *IsiMpondo* at home and either Zulu or Xhosa at school. There is a possibility of *isiMpondo* dying out before it develops to a written form.

Khoi/San children might see some of their dialects die out without being in print. Probably, both Pondo and Khoi/San children aspire to see their own languages being written one day like those they learn at school. However, this does not mean that these children see their mother tongue as inferior because it is still transmitted orally.

The possibility of written languages and non-written languages growing parallel to each other seems to accommodate what in this discussion is referred to as the second phase.

The third phase accommodates what Ong refers to as 'second orality' which is dominated by electronic modes of communication such as television and telephones, incorporates elements from both the chirographic mode and the orality mode which has been subordinate for some time. Countries of the first world like Great Britain belong to this phase. Despite the fact that languages of societies in these countries have greatly developed as far as the aspect of writing, print and electronics is concerned, orality still finds its way through because people still feel the need to hear a human voice whether by means of voice mail or telephone or television.

This shows that the spoken word still permeates amongst people and makes a strong stand to be heard loud and clear despite the fact people are obsessed by the electronic revolution. Orality seems to be persistent hence Ong says the basic orality of language is permanent because speech is inseparable from our consciousness. It has fascinated humans long before the writing system began.

#### 4.3 **The primacy of memory in narratives**

Belarmino (1995:1) states: “ Delivery, and memory are both of significant importance to orality.”

Ong explains that the structure of oral narratives is such that it facilitates easy storage and retrieval of information. Narratives serve as oral storehouses of history and tradition. In literate cultures narratives tend to follow a linear plot-line without any mnemonic structures.

In oral culture a person’s memory was the power-house on which one could rely for the retrieval or re-enacting of information when there was a need to communicate or persuade in the hope of provoking thought, action, or both. However, having good memory does not mean to be able to do a mere repetition of mnemonically memorised structured formulas or content. An oral presentation has to be lively, dramatic and entertaining to the audience. Accordingly, a well-entertained audience may respond by singing, clapping, listening attentively, dancing and ululating.

#### 4.4 **Formulas for tapping memory**

Opland in Canonici (1994:10) divides formulae in two groups:

a) Personal formulae, which are phrases and sentences that the poet has used in other performances and impromptu creations and is able to re-use when the argument or subject of his poem is similar. Such formulae can only be discovered by the analysis of a wide range of a poet’s personal performances, which is only possible with recording, and

b) Regional formulae, which consist of sentences, phrases, images, widely used by poets in one area. Such formulae can be detected by parallel studies of oral poetry in one area, or by

the comparison of the recorded (and possibly published) *izibongo* in one language or in sister language.

Belarmino [op.cit.:1] maintains that in the days of Plato and sophism, orality was the chief means of inducing thought or action. Ong (1982:35) highlights the key elements used for the success of oral communication:

“In an oral culture, to think through something in non-formulaic, non-patterned, non-mnemonic terms, even if it were possible, would be a waste of time, for such thought, once worked through, could never be recovered with any effectiveness, as it could be with the aid of writing.”

Since there was no writing during traditional times, people had only one option for retrieving information in their memory. As oral communication was intertwined with the memory system, it meant that thoughts had to be expressed in easily remembered formulas which had to be constantly repeated, so that they would not be lost.

In Canonici [op.cit:6] Albert Lord defines formulas as:

“ a group of words which is regularly employed under the same metrical conditions to express a given essential idea.”

Such formulaic uses of language aided in the retention of knowledge and consequently contributed to the saliency and enhancement of the memorability of an utterance.

#### 4.5 **The importance of interaction between an oral performance and audience**

One of the major disadvantages of writing that Ong discusses in his book is the way writing distances the originator of a thought from the receiver because writing does not provide a place for the performance stage, performer and both visual and audio dimensions which are



used as key elements for linking the originator of the thought to his or her audience.

The inclusion of these elements is vital in that they involve the participation of the audience. For example, when the performer narrates a folktale even for one person, a lively and a dramatic participation is possible because there are always core responses in every folktale that should be said by the listener or audience. The performer starts the folktale thus: *kwesukasukela* (once upon a time). The audience whether made of a single person or a group replies: *cosu* (a little bit).

Some folktales have portions which are sung in between by both the performer and the audience. The singing or response makes the audience feel invited to join in the stage performance together with the performer.

In a speech performance the audience may be given an opportunity to ask the performer directly or contest his or her performance. If it is a dance performance, the audience can ululate or clap hands to motivate the performer to perform with zeal in order to give the audience most pleasing entertainment. Dasylva in Kaschula (2001:181) states:

“Oral literary performance is collective expression and the celebration of culture-related communal experiences that give voice to loric values. These values are rooted in the philosophical hermeneutics of a predominantly traditional society.”

The involvement of the audience heightens the emotional and dramatic impact because when the audience is asked to contribute to the performance with the knowledge they have, the audience feels that their knowledge about the act performed is valued. In that way they feel part of the cultural act taking place on the stage. As a result, the performance becomes a communal experience, as both the performer and the audience eventually get involved in the thought which was originally started by the performer.

The other reason for the importance of interaction between the performer and the audience in oral performance is that the audience is given a chance to store the performance in their memory while the performance is still at its initial stage of being performed.

#### **4.6 Writing restructures consciousness**

Ong's focus shifts from a discussion of primary orality to the development of script and how this restructures our consciousness. One of the most important effects he discusses is the way that writing distances the originator of a thought from the receiver. Writing does this by enabling the existence of discourse which cannot be directly questioned or contested as oral speech can be, because written discourse is detached from the writer. In addition, the more entrenched writing becomes as a mode of expression, the more humans move from an oral-based context to the world of writing.

#### **4.7 From writing to printing and closure**

Through print words become things that can be arranged on a page. What is in print remains unchanged. It becomes a finality or stereotype because what is in print stands written for ages.

For example, Jews did not regard Jesus as their king. During the crucifixion Pontius Pilate, the Roman Governor wrote that Jesus was the king of the Jews. The Jews became furious about what Pilate had written and they tried to force him to change what he had written.

On the contrary, Pilate told them that what he had written would always stand thus. According to Ong the finality of a written word causes closure which was not found during story-telling in oral culture.

#### 4.8 **Orality and literacy supplement each other**

Preliterate societies described exotic realities that still remain distant and alien to us who are grown up out of a both printing and electronic age of computer databases, telephones, voice mails and televisions.

I am reminded of the words of Ian Player about the late Magqubu Ntombela. Ian Player works for Wildlife in KwaZulu-Natal. He is also a renowned conservationist and environmentalist. I was deeply struck by Ian Player when he mentioned that his success in the field of nature conservation was engineered with the aid of Magqubu, a traditionalist with a high profile and a universal admiration for his profound knowledge about animals, birds and nature conservation. Magqubu was illiterate, but Player describes him as the most learned associate. Player said that Magqubu's book of knowledge was his own head. Magqubu's teachers were his own eyes and ears, and the school was the environment.

The working relationship between the two personalities with different backgrounds bridged the negative stigma of illiteracy from Magqubu's side. Their sharing of knowledge despite their difference in status of literacy was creating a link between orality and literacy because Magqubu would narrate his traditional knowledge and Player would write down the information and then analyse it scientifically. Writing is not meant to reduce orality but enhance it, as Saussure in Ong [op.cit.:5] suggests, when he describes writing as a kind of complement to oral speech, not as a transformer of verbalisation.

Narration, discussion and sharing knowledge in a dialogue provided both parties a fair chance in engaging in an oral act. In this context Magqubu was not deprived of his oral presentation and activation of his memory. His most cherished oral knowledge got an opportunity of being reserved in both 'storehouses' which are his memory and Player's writings.

Magqubu is no more but his most valuable knowledge is reserved for future generations. In the present context writing takes a centre stage when it comes to recording because when human memory becomes fragile and has lapses due to age and ill-health, writing becomes an indelible record. In that way writing provides viable means of preserving and linking oral culture while meeting the increased demands of modern printing and electronics.

It is a situation where these two cultures might be seen as complementing each other.

“The electronic age is also an age of ‘secondary orality’, the orality of telephones, radio, and television, which depends on writing and print for its existence.” Ong, [op.cit.:3]

From Belarmino’s point of view [op.cit.:2] the link between literacy and orality is stronger than most people would like to argue.

This discussion highlighted the point that neither orality nor literacy is superior for the purposes of human communication. Each is equally important in its specific context. Ong also maintains that learning to read and write as a way of communicating with others may mean more than being literate. It may also change how people think. It may explain why orality is less important than literacy in some people’s minds, especially when society is beginning to depend more on the writing system and less on oral literature for communication.

The following discussion concentrates on oral literature and traditions as they are still an important source or a living stream of a Zulu narrative.

#### 4.9 **Division of Zulu oral literature**

Zulu oral literature covers very broad and complex genres as seen by its many equivalent names and description as the following will show: folklore, folk literature, oral art, oral culture, oral didactic literature, oral narrative, oral tradition, oral performance, oral

communication systems, etc. Canonici [op.cit.:1] shortens the above list as he states:

“The various forms (or genres) of oral composition are known under the general term Oral literature or Oral traditions.”

Zulu oral literature can be further divided into two major categories which are: prose and poetry.

A. Traditional prose genres

A very important part of Zulu oral literature is the narrative genre or oral narratives which include:

- myths
- legends
- stories
- fables
- folktales

These are the vessels in which the cultural, social and spiritual heritage of Africa is embedded and transmitted. These forms of orality or oral communication systems have a common denominator which is telling a story, a form of communication that is most essential in an oral culture as it makes all the other genres overlap and interconnected.

B. poetic genres include:

- Oral praise poetry
- Oral lullabies and children's songs
- Songs

- Oral clan praises
- Proverbs

It is appropriate to focus mainly on proverbs as the type of oral literature which features itself in almost all other genres of Zulu oral literature. Proverbs are also the observable oral elements in written literature.

#### 4.10 **The origins of proverbs**

The word proverb is used in this context in the more inclusive sense to cover specific proverbs, maxims, adages and aphorisms.

Proverbs are invented in several ways. Some are simple apophthegms, platitudes, phrases and sentences customarily used in a single special situation elevated to proverbial dignity. Others arise from the symbolic or metaphoric use of an incident, still others imitate already existing proverbs and some owe their existence to the condensing of a story or fable.

#### 4.11 **Sources of proverbs**

Zulu proverbs have in common knowledge no known author or literary source. Proverbs, generally speaking are not identified as having been said or written by any particular individual. Instead they come from the communal source and originate in 'folk wisdom'.

Zulu proverbs, especially those that originated prior to an era of writing do not often indicate the sources on which they draw because many of them have been handed down by word of mouth from generation to generation with slight variations in the wording.

What follows is an incomplete sample of the field of experience dealt with by Zulu proverbs.

The simple wisdom of proverbs is based on the observation and experiences of natural phenomena, of the behaviour of domestic or wild animals, birds, of things people do and say, of religious beliefs and practices and of events that can fire the imagination. Some proverbs are drawn from folktales, of which they constitute the moral or the easily remembered core, others from historical events. Historical allusions refer to those proverbs with specific factual stories behind them.

There are also fictional allusions: for proverbs that do not necessarily have an empirical base but are allusive. Many proverbs are presented as quotations from some imaginary or actual character.

#### 4.11.1 Proverbs attributed to selected Zulu kings

##### a) King Dingane

*Sobohla Manyosi* (Manyosi, your stomach will be flattened) is a proverb which is believed to have originated with Dingane. Manyosi Mbatha was Dingane's warrior who was said to be able to eat the entire goat. This made his stomach grow very big. When he decided to leave Dingane for Mpande, it is said that Dingane discouraged him from going because he would starve under Mpande's kingdom which means that he would not enjoy the favours and privileges he used to get from Dingane. I was very delighted to see Manyosi's grave at Kwaguqu in the Mahlabathini district.

##### b) King Mpande

Tradition has it that when the two sons of King Mpande, namely Cetshwayo and Mbuyazi, went to battle at Ndulinde, Mpande uttered the following words: *kodel' uMakhasana yen' oyozi bona zibulalana*. (I envy you, Makhasana who will see the bulls killing each other)

#### 4.11.2 Proverbs about customs and traditions

More attractive are the proverbs which contain evidence of manners and customs amongst Zulu society. Through such proverbs one can estimate the worth of different manners of expression which are valued by a particular society. Mieder and Dundes (1981:19) states:

“ Some proverbs, furthermore, are obscure even to local individuals or groups. We cannot, then expect Zulu proverbs to be crystal-clear or to be able to grasp in each case the modes through which they figuratively or picturesquely suggest certain truths. These proverbs are expressed by a straight, relatively literal statement.”

However, we must distinguish between a proverb that refers to a particular historical event and a proverb which alludes to a custom or condition that has become obscure or no longer exists.

The following proverb may be used as an example to show how obscurity of certain proverbs associated with custom or tradition or condition may come about and how they can be easily forgotten or become obscure when they are no longer in frequent use.

*Siyibulele siyilindile* (It has killed it and it is watching it). The syntactic elisions crept in, in this proverb. Such elisions create ambiguity as the subject concords *si-* in both sentences may refer to any noun in class 7; while the object concord *-yi-* may also represent any noun in class 9.

The confusion arises as both the subject and object in both sentences are not explicitly specified. These syntactic variations could have been a conscious motive with the assumption that speakers understood each other or they sneaked into the language without anyone noticing. The rhetoric speakers of old, could not have had any problem in understanding each other as they were speaking from almost the same socio-linguistic background. It is the



present reader who might have a problem due to his or her unfamiliarity with the expressions.

It is in such cases where the input of the local community becomes vitally importance. For example, on my exploratory research, some informants mentioned that the subject concord *si-* in both *siyibulele* and *siyilindile* represent a leopard while the *-yi* stands for its prey.

The informants who were interviewed about this particular proverb had been hunters and cattle-herders, people who are familiar with life in the wild. These informants mentioned that the leopard has a habit of opening the stomach of its prey to take out the internal parts to make it easy for itself to carry its prey up the tree for reservation because it does not eat its prey when it is still bleeding.

Due to this reason the leopard hangs its prey on a tree to ensure that blood is drained out of the body of its prey. While blood is being drained out in this way, the leopard watches closely over its prey to avoid it being stolen by other predators.

The majority of people in the present context who are no longer familiar with hunting or behaviour of the leopard might find the language or expression used in this proverb archaic.

Language is the most flexible aspect of communication because it changes with time to suit the socio-linguistic perception of the people who speak it. Linguistic changes, obscurity and difficulties are inevitable in the interpretation of metaphors reflecting animals and birds in proverbs as a huge number of members of the community has become more distant from the environments with wild animals and got into contact with diverse linguistic forms in urban environments.

#### 4.11.3 Proverbs in literature

The freedom with which proverbs are used in literature varies greatly with different genres. A proverb offers very convenient illustrations of problems that arise in every genre of folklore. In literature proverbs are often used to characterise a particular country and its people as well as their language in general and may be used in sophisticated writing for some reasons.

However, in the study or the use of proverbs we must know the circumstances in which they occur, the kinds of proverbs chosen so that their rhetorical value is made more precise and effective. For example, writing which has a satiric aim employs many proverbs, particularly when it appeals to the emotions of the audience.

Historical or political songs such as those which were sung during the struggle against apartheid regime in South Africa are supposed to contain more proverbial sayings than narrative or lyric songs. One of the most popular songs of the struggle is *Shosholoz* which means to dash further away across the lands. Instead of using a common word like *hamba* (to go), the inventor of this song decided to use a highly impressive saying like *Shosholoz* to make an impact on his or her listeners who had no other choice except running away from the oppressive government of the day to continue their political struggle elsewhere.

It is a common practice at religious gatherings to hear a minister or a preacher citing a proverb in his sermon to address the faithful as a way of driving home a point. *Isalakutshelwa sibona ngomopho* (a head strong see with blood) is a popular proverb which is often cited by most church ministers when advising young people about the effects of irresponsible sexual behaviour which often leads one being contaminated with HIV/Aids.

The interconnection between proverbs and narratives can be identified if we consider that proverbs are essentially summaries of experiences, real or fictional. Even an ordinary story

often contains a proverb or a saying in a form of a theme to highlight the moral lesson of the story. 'Sibambe Elentulo' (We hold onto the word of the Lizard) is an example of a folktale whose heading is a proverb.

Besides summarising the messages or giving credence to the experience narrated, the citation of the proverb indirectly helps to maintain the link between the two genres without the speaker or author being aware of the link being created.

#### 4.12 Proverbs and riddles

Riddles are children's word games, to stimulate their imagination, spirit of observation, use of language, and to identify the various meanings of words. Proverbs and riddles are two closely related forms of didactic literature in statement and question form. They both play an important role in traditional Zulu society in the process by which the young are initiated to life or educated to a cultural tradition. They teach the young to respect adults, be considerate and responsible in their behaviour.

The relationship between proverbs and riddles with regard to metaphors is that they both describe a person or a thing through an obscure metaphor calculated to exercise the intellectual skill of the listener or participant.

Following are two examples from both proverbs and riddles which show the link between the two genres as far as cleanliness is concerned.

- a) a riddle: *ngiye kumngane wami wanginika isicephu. Ngithe ngingakahlali kuso sase sesihlezi abanye abantu.* (I went to my friend and she gave me a rush-mat to sit. Before I could sit down on it some people came and occupied my place.

The answer to this story-like riddle is: the flies on food.

b) a proverb: *impukane ijinga isilonda* (a fly flies around an open sore).

If there is a bad sore which is not covered with a bandage, flies usually flock around it.

Flies are domestic insects which haunt humans in the home environment. The most successful way to keep them away is to keep our places clean and by covering our food and areas on our bodies that may attract them.

The image of a fly has been purposely used in both examples with an aim of showing the relationship between the two genres. There are other several features that one can identify between the two genres but the most relevant in this context is a metaphor. The fly metaphor which has been reflected in the two examples signifies dirt which has to be avoided in our places if we want to stay healthy.

#### 4.13 **Formulas for tapping memory in both proverbs and *izibongo* (praises-poems)**

Linking through a word and/or root repetition is extremely common in Zulu and can be identified in different patterns such as initial, middle and final word repetition or through the use of the figures of speech such as irony, personification, metaphor, simile and contrast. The following examples will be used to clarify the point.

a) An example from a praise poem:

*Walala wangangemifula*, (He slept and equaled rivers)

*Wavuka wangangezintaba*. (He woke up and equaled mountains)

- Linking

The initial linking or repetition pattern created by *wa-* and *wangange-* in the middle is observed.

- Sound patterns

Alliteration of letters *-w-* and *-ng-* and the assonance created by *-a-* and *-e-* bind the stanza together.

The sounds and beats form musical patterns. Patterns impose order upon experience. They help build expectation, so that even if what we expect does not occur, we are still able to assimilate it to make it easy and pleasurable.

- Paired contrast

The pattern develops out of *walala* and *wavuka* through a contrast between sleeping and as well as between *imifula* (rivers) and *izintaba* (mountains) which represent low and high respectively.

Notice opposite parallelism of *wavuka* and *walala* which intensifies the contrast between being active and resting, or between up and down. When a person sleeps, he or she lies on the ground which is down. Likewise the river flows on the ground.

Waking or rising up involves going upward. The mountains also rise upwards towards the sky. The flow of a river stands for the passage of time, and for other things subject to time. The river metaphor works this way. Just as rivers flow, we think of time as flowing. The metaphor of mountains leaves us with a picture of one who rises high

above others in power, maturity and wisdom. The metaphor of both rivers and mountains is personification.

b) An example from proverbs:

Let us look at the following proverb and see if we can identify elements that might be related to those of the above stanza from the praise- poem.

*Ubik' imbib'abik'ibuzi* (He reports a striped field- mouse then he reports a rat). He is unreliable.

When we hear this sentence we tend to understand it not only in terms of the concrete, visual scene, it represents to us, but as a story. Even when there is no actual story present, the sentence implies that something has taken place. The sentence-story is about someone who is unreliable.

One of the things that one can look for in this proverb is a contrast, or sometimes several contrasts. The parallel structure of the above proverb is also enhanced by the strong sense of contrast, both between a striped field -mouse and a rat. This is a paired contrast because it takes place between the two objects.

The realm of experience being referred to here is hunting. But clearly this proverb is not only about a mouse and a rat in the grass or about hunting. The metaphor points out the similarity between one thing and the other. That is, if we did not know or did not want to use this proverb we might have said something like this instead: so and so says this and that which means he is a liar. Telling different things to different people is described as telling lies. It remains roughly the same but the second version is longer and is neither memorable nor expressive.

Alliteration is created by a letter -b- in proverb as it was in the stanza. When words are alliterated we not only hear the sound repeated, we are asked, in some way, to consider any other ways how the key words in the proverb might be related. Here the words are related because:

- every word carries the letter sound -b-
- they are words of more than one syllable
- semantically they are nouns that represent a congruent scene we can imagine somewhere in the veld between mice and rats.
- the powerful repetition of *wabika* provide emphasis.

To discover pattern in language we look for what is repeated, for parallel structure in the sentence, for balance or rhythm, and for important contrasts. Patterns in the above examples which form rhythm in both the stanza and the proverb show us that there is a relationship between the two linguistic forms of speech. The rhythm is essential in these forms because it brings the audience to attention and because it is memorable.

Paired constrasts are fundamental in life as we also live our life in contrast patterns: waking up vs sleeping, crying vs laughing, life vs death, etc. These can be called life-time rhythms or patterns.

#### 4.14 Proverbs and *izisho* (idioms)

Literally the word *izisho* means ‘sayings’. It refers specifically to a phrase or grammatical construction that cannot be literally translated into another language because an idiomatic expression is an expression peculiar to a particular language or group of people. In other words it can be said that an idiom is language specific because its meaning is not equivalent to that of its component words.

#### 4.14.1 Basic characteristics of *izisho*

- a) noun +adjective  
*amanzi amponjwana* (water with little horns): water with intoxicating powers: beer
- b) noun +possessive  
*inja yomoya* (the dog of the wind): a rolling stone
- c) verb +objective  
*ukuphuza imvula* (to drink the rain): to be terribly wet
- d) verb +verb:  
*uhamba ehlala* (he lives here and there): a homeless one
- e) noun+ noun  
*amathe nolimi* (saliva and the tongue): to be in great friendly terms

The above examples show that Zulu idioms are constructed from a variety of parts of speech. This makes them rich sources of thoughtful and unusual definitions of things, advice about human behaviour, customs and beliefs, bird and animal behaviour and natural phenomena.

#### 4.14.2 A lack of a universal appeal in *izisho*

Zulu idioms also tend to be highly expressive and often imaginative and employ amusing ways to use language. However, one might ask: if *izisho* represent language at its best by employing smart, succinct, witty, cynical and highly expressive forms of language how can one differentiate them from proverbs?

Canonici (1994:44) states:

“Proverbs deal with the same field of experience as idioms, but they make general statements which assume a universal value as they are meant as behavioural guidelines. Proverbs state an accepted truth; an idiom is a mere



description of something, a sort of standardised quotation. Furthermore, while proverbs have a complete meaning and are used as self-standing and complete sentences, idioms do not. They are groups of words that are integrated in the sentence structure, and are therefore referable to any word class, in any grammatical category. They are thus inflected according to normal grammatical rules. The internal relationship between the words that make up an idiom is however fixed, otherwise an idiom would no longer be an idiom. This adaptation to the grammatical structure of any sentence is the reason why, in spite of their bold imagery which often equals that of proverbs and poetry, *izisho* cannot be considered as a poetic genre because they lack the rhythm which is essential feature of poetry.”

In this statement we learn that *izisho* lack the universal appeal that proverbs have. For example, if a person is not wearing shoes, people usually comment with this saying: *Uhamba ngoCetshwayo*. (He walks bare-footed). Let us look closely at our referent, Cetshwayo to trace an implication. The first implication could be that although people started wearing shoes during Cetshwayo’s reign, he alone would not wear them for his own personal reasons. Secondly, the idiom might also be telling us that all the other kings that came after him had no problems with wearing shoes.

It is also said that Cetshwayo had huge feet which could have caused a problem for him to get the right size for himself. There should be something significant about Cetshwayo’s problem with shoes. Thirdly, the saying might be telling us that due to the size problem, Cetshwayo could not wear shoes even when he was convicted in England during the reign of Queen Victoria. A king without shoes could have been something unfamiliar in England. Probably, the British remarked and the king’s escorts told the story when they returned home to KwaZulu.

All these speculations do not tell us exactly why Cetshwayo would not wear shoes. We are left with a picture that there was something peculiar about Cetshwayo and shoes.

Although this saying is common, it still lacks a universal appeal. Its application is limited to a

Zulu context. It may not be applicable in a universal context as it often happens with proverbs. The following example clarifies the point:

*Kudla fumuka kudle silaza* [it] death eats the freshly-brewed beer as well as stale beer. This means that death is inevitable for every one. Unlike the idiom about Cetshwayo this proverb can be applicable to a universal context because both young and old die in the world over. Death is a global phenomenon.

The universal impact reflected in proverbs could be one of the reasons that make them feature in almost every genre of Zulu folk wisdom.

#### 4.15 **Proverbs as maxims**

Maxims are associated with general truth, laws, both judicial and moral. They are easily used in passing judgement and can therefore appear in legal contexts.

Zulu maxims give us a kind of law not written down in books. They provide not only an access to the supposed truth or to rules that derive from that truth for conducting our life. The maxim is an observation regarding experience from which one may learn how to live and behave.

Maxims are often subtly suggesting that things are not always as they appear. They frequently require some thought in order to decipher what they might mean. When we decipher their meaning, we come to understand things about ourselves, and about other people. Maxims speak generally about supposed universals, using words. Like aphorisms, they sometimes play with words to help us understand something about language itself.

*Isihlahla asinyelwa* (Do not excrete your faeces at a tree) is a maxim which is used to encourage people to express gratitude to those who offer them help. Showing a sense of gratitude is like investing for the future because people are often attracted towards individuals who appreciate things they are given.

It is good to look at the origin of this maxim. It should be remembered that during traditional times Zulu people used to travel long distances on foot. Trees along the path provided them with fruits and shade. People used to prefer to sit in shades where water was close by. A tree was also used by a traveler as a refuge when attacked by wild animals.

Since wild trees were a national asset, they had to be protected and kept clean so that whoever passed by would be comfortable sitting in their shades. The above maxim shows us that travelers had to be often reminded of their responsibility of maintaining areas around trees in an acceptable condition. This maxim might have originated as a warning to people who were negligent and left trees in an appalling condition, forgetting that they would still need to rest in these trees in future. It is presumed that this maxim came about as a way of teaching people to be considerate. It can also be said that this maxim originated as a code of conduct for travelers.

Another maxim that is often used as a warning is: *Wayithinta imfibinga kwaNodwengu* (Woe unto you, you who touch the *imfibinga* of Nodwengu). Nodwengu is a royal homestead of Mpande at Ulundi. The princesses of this royal homestead used to wear beads which was called *imfibinga* that was made from a special tree.

Touching the *imfibinga* in this context means to do a daring act which can be equaled to entering the royal kraal of Nodwengu and have a romantic relationship with one of the princesses. This maxim is used as a caution to people who often dare to tread where even angels fear to tread.

*Ukuthula ukuvuma* (Silence gives consent) is often used as a legal maxim which is commonly used during court cases when a person does not respond to charges laid against him or her. The onlookers take it for granted that the accused is guilty.

Maxims come to challenge in a weird or peculiar manner which makes one think about one's behaviour and about the world around him or her. They challenge an individual to see what they mean to that particular individual. In that way they become a reminder about behaving in certain ways, and observing certain rules.

Proverbs appear superior to other forms of oral knowledge because of the stance of highlighting communal values, and they present us with a codified wisdom of a society accumulated over many years of happy and bitter experiences. In them we see the society's perception of life. However, there are critics who do not see the future of Zulu proverbs.

#### **4.16 Negative perceptions about proverbs in the present context**

Critics maintain that Zulu proverbs and sayings have no future because they are historically part of rural societies where they have been used to thwart innovation in Zulu traditional society and reinforce conservative values. They have been status-quo, oriented rather than change-oriented.

Critics further hold strong conviction that Zulu proverbs are used as a vehicle or a pattern created by society to devalue women by criticising and humiliating them as they portray a submissive image of women.

“A cursory glance at any major proverbs collection reveals the obvious anti-feminism prevalent in proverbs. Almost every proverb that touches on women contains a severe negation of the value of women in society.” (Ntshinga in Barnes, 1996:11)

It cannot be denied that the Zulu are a patriarchal society where leadership is mostly in

the hands of men. It can be argued that Zulu proverbs are sexist or gender-based and instruments to devalue women. Proverbs touch on every aspect of the life of the people who create them. Proverbs have been passed down from one person to the other, for generations as a relic of society, women included. In chapter seven for instance, there are proverbs which have been specifically selected to portray a positive image about women.

#### 4.17 New version of proverbs and idioms

Zulu society has undergone drastic socio-political changes since the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. These changes are also reflected in the genre of proverbs as well idioms as the following examples will show. It can be argued that the creation of new proverbs and idioms as an impact of social change on language shows that both Zulu proverbs and idioms have a future in the present context as their message is relevant to it.

When the Zulu say that a thing or an event will never come true, they often use these proverbs: *lingawa licoshwe zinkukhu* (it can fall down and the fowls can pick it up) or *ungabon' amehl' esibungu*. (you can see the eyes of a maggot) The third example which says: *umlung' angathung' isicoco*, (a white man can wear a head-ring) also means that a thing will never come to pass. The third proverb reflects a change in Zulu society which was caused by their interaction with other nations whose men did not follow the Zulu custom of wearing the head-rings as a sign of maturity and a high social status.

*Wakhahlelwa yindlov' esifubeni*, means that one was kicked by an elephant on the chest. This idiom is used to describe a person who never keeps a secret. Owing to the size of the elephant's feet people imagine that a person whose chest has got a kicking from this huge animal will never heal which means it is beyond surgery. It appears that when white people arrived with a horse, the Zulu closely observed this new animal with an aim of learning its behaviour. The following variant idiom tells us that the Zulu could identify something:

*wakhahlelwa yihash' esifubeni.* (he or she was kicked by the horse on the chest) Probably, the Zulu were amazed to find a strange animal within the environment of the home whose kicking techniques resembled that of a mighty elephant. Both herbivores seem to have one thing in common, that is the strength.

There is also a saying that has also entered the language due to the behaviour of a horse. *Usibanibani yihashi lomfundisi.* (So and so is the minister's horse) This saying is used to describe a person who stops here and there to chat with everyone she or he meets. It is said that this saying originated with religious ministers who during their early years of evangelism used to stop whenever they met a person to ask or tell him or her about the Good News of Salvation. Unfortunately, the ministers did not train their horses not to stop when the person had been seen previously or when the minister was in a hurry. As a result, the horse would stop even if the minister did not want to say something to the person passing by.

#### 4.18 **Comic adaptations of forms of proverbs**

Zungu (1998:1) states:

“Relexification is a process whereby the grammar of a language is retained but new lexical items are introduced replacing older forms. Old proverbs are relexified in order to accommodate new situations... The reason for such a process is to modernise the older expression in order to make them more meaningful to modern societies.”

Zungu in her *Corpus of Traditional Vs Modern Zulu Proverbs in IsiZulu Sobumbano* (1998) as well as in her (1996) paper: “New Lamps for Old: Relexification of traditional Zulu proverbs and idioms.” presents a number of comic adaptations of proverbs which are formed through the process of relexification. Following are the two examples of such comic adaptations of proverbs which Zungu claims to be used at certain institutions of education.

An old form of a proverb

New version

*Hamba juba bayokuchutha phambili.*

(Go dove. They will pluck your feathers ahead)

*Hamba juba bayokuchutha eMatendeni.*

(Go dove. They will pluck your feathers at Matendeni)

*Isalakutshelwa sibona ngomopho.*

(The foolhardy learns by the flow of blood)

*(Isalakutshelwa sibona ngengculaza.*

(The foolhardy learns by picking an AIDS virus)

The above arrangement is somehow confusing because Zungu does not say whether the comically relexified versions of proverbs still retain their proverbial status or not. However, if the following statement is taken into consideration it appears that the old and new forms of proverbs in the above arrangement have equal status:

“There are proverbs and idioms which are replaced by new ones and this is based on the premise that contemporary societies also create their own proverbs and expressions which befit their lifestyles.” Zungu [ibid]

The problem is not with the relexification of proverbs per se. The point here concerns the status of these comic adaptations of proverbs, whether they have similar status in the language as the original forms or not. Moon (1997:2) states:

“Proverbs come about for several reasons, and in many ways, some may arise from simple apophthegms and platitudes which over time are elevated to the status of a proverb.”

The point of elevation of lower expressions to a higher proverbial status may also apply to these relexified forms of proverbs. It can be argued that relexified proverbs do not automatically become proverbs at the same time they are relexified. Ishengoma (2000:33) states:

“Proverbs had a great role (and still have) in our African societies. Besides being recreational and entertaining, proverbs build community.”

This statement draws our attention to a major role of proverbs which is the building of society. This statement further gives us an allusion that the relexified forms of proverbs are also bound to show qualities that build society prior to their acceptance in the genre of proverbs because the process of relexification seems to relegate them to a lower status. This means that the relexified forms of proverbs which are not yet elevated to the proverbial status might be regarded as duplicates of the original forms which do not carry the authority of their own.

It is good to consider this relexified version: *isalakutshelwa sibona ngengculaza*. (The foolhardy learns by picking an AIDS virus) This new form gives us an impression that every obstinate person suffers from an AIDS virus. This means that contracting AIDS is the only sign of being a foolhardy. This new form of proverb might also be understood as no longer applying to the people who have already contracted the virus because they have been already stigmatised as the ‘obstinates.’ This means that an individual can be obstinate in other aspects of life but he or she cannot reap the outcomes of his or her reckless behaviour because she or he has already contracted aids which according to this new form is the only punishment of those who are disobedient.

During AIDS awareness campaigns it is often heard that people who are engaged in reckless sexual activities are more likely to contract an AIDS virus. However, in this context it can be argued that engagement in irresponsible sexual behaviour is one aspect of life. A proverb should be interpreted in a number of ways. An aspect of health cannot be used as the only way of describing an obstinate person. There are a number of ways for contracting an AIDS virus. Some babies are born with it. Can we say they suffer because they did not take heed of advice? There are individuals of both sexes who have been loyal in their sexual relationship but because of their respective partners who have been dishonest, they are either inflicted or



affected by this fatal disease.

To use one specific aspect of life limits the contexts for the application of the proverb. In this way the new version becomes selective or exclusive. It no longer carries the universal truth like the original form that follows.

The original form says: *isalakutshelwa sibona ngomopho*. (the foolhardy learns by the flow of blood) This means that an obstinate person who does not take heed of advice or caution learns the hard way. The *umopho* (a flow of blood) in this context represents any kind of misery, misfortune, difficulty, illness and aids virus included, etc. This means that anyone who ignores advice or caution, hard life is inevitable for him or her. The original form is neither restricted by time nor location. It is challenging the members of society of every age to have a listening attitude and welcome caution from all aspects of life. This means that its proverbial status as well as its wise message has an impact in the past, present and the future societies. On the contrary, the new version changes with time and circumstances. For example, if aids can be cured it means that this new version will become irrelevant in a society without aids. Kunene (1994:1) writes: “*Ubuhlakani bezaga bukhona busaqhubeka.*” (The wisdom of proverbs is there and it still continues)

The creation of new proverbs by the present society cannot be denied because the formation of proverbs is an oral art which is timeless. Contemporary societies can create proverbs which benefit their own lifestyles. However, the required integration of traditional proverbs with modern life is not simply a matter of learning to quote or relexify a few proverbs now and then.

“Careful study is needed at many levels and from various disciplines so that the themes and patterns of proverbs can be recognised, appreciated and evaluated.” {African Proverbs Project, 2000:2}.

This statements seems to highlight the point that scholars and researchers have a mission of integrating the traditional life style and its values with the modern one without losing the significance of proverbs with particular attention to their relationship to Zulu tradition, culture, social life and their role in the present context.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter attempted to highlight the point that both oral culture and the writing system will always be part and parcel of our lives as equal systems because each has a role to play at a specific context. The fact that orality was the chief means of inducing thought or action during traditional times does not make this system irrelevant in the present context. Orality remains dynamic because it allows the speaker or performer to combine an act of creation with an act of transmission.

This chapter also pointed out that Zulu proverbs are still a real treasure trove of oral literature as they represent the national tradition, that is, the tradition that abides in all the strata of the population. They also constitute a lifestyle of Zulu society. They were composed by people of a particular milieu and passed on through the generations by a nation eager to know, remember and honour the wisdom of their ancestors who are claimed to have originated them and lived by their moral code. As a result, proverbs form a considerable part of the code of conduct for an entire population, and are jealously treasured by it.

## Chapter 5

### THE SYMBOLIC REPRESENTATION OF SHAKA'S FIGURE AND BEHAVIOUR IN THE FOUR IMAGES OF THE ZULU "ROYAL ANIMAL FAVOURITES"

#### Introduction

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century when Shaka came to power there was a drastic change in Nguniland. The main interest of Shaka was the growth of the insignificant Zulu clan into a mighty nation by conquest and incorporation. Through his prowess in the battlefield as well as in the administration of affairs of the state his kingdom flourished. As a result, the Zulu clan changed from the insignificant Zulu clan to the dominant Zulu nation which was characterised by success in all aspects of life.

Shaka's conquests, unification and prosperity are construed and magnified in one's imagination according to the signals given by the chosen words and images of ferocious animals of the wild reflected in his *izibongo* (praise-poems).

The combination of images of animals with superior power and with aggressive temperaments helps one to create a prototype of Shaka and his activities especially in the time of the integration of the Nguni clans into a united Zulu nation.

Proverbs are used in everyday speech in the context of prose. Like *izibongo* they also possess qualities that distinguish them from prose as they also show a kind of poetic feature in form and the careful choice of words whose figurative meaning is couched beneath the literal level. Both genres abound in evocative, emotive and most effective images, which are a concentrated method of description through the use of simile, metaphor, personification and symbol to stimulate imagination and emotions. However, behind beautiful words and images

or symbols there should be semantics which give one a clue of what a word, image or symbol implies to a particular society.

This chapter focuses on the representation of Shaka's figure and behaviour through the use of images of the big four of the wild which are: the lion, leopard, buffalo and the elephant which are often referred to as Zulu "royal animals". It also sets out to examine the implication of these images or symbols reflected both in proverbs and *izibongo* within the Zulu socio-cultural context. Symbols are often culturally defined. Finnegan in Biyela (1998:84) states:

“ Some knowledge of the locally accepted symbolic associations of words and objects is essential. There may be some symbols which have universal reference, but for the most part, local symbolism, whether it is to do with colours, numbers, places, phenomena of the natural world or social forms, is culturally defined.”

## 5.1 A lion symbol

Lions are great, formidable and fascinating predators that have dominated the fauna for many centuries and have also attracted researchers with their developed social system which is based on teamwork roles which enable them to survive under hard situations of the wild. Such a developed social system makes lions an exception as most cat species live a fundamentally solitary existence. Guy (1972:73) states: “ There is no animal symbol as important or as evocative in human history as the maned lion.” According to {African Wildlife Foundation} ((2000:1) the lion is a magnificent animal that appears as a symbol of power, courage and nobility on family crests, coats of arms and national flags in many civilizations.

Lions have long enjoyed a pre-eminent reputation in proverbial metaphors, symbolism, folklore and religion of cultures of the world. In the Bible, Jesus Christ is referred to as a lion

of Judah who came to earth to restore God's kingdom. The Zulu are also fascinated by the lion. Generally, a lion in Zulu is called *ibhubesi*. But when this name is used in reference to the Zulu king, *ingonyama* or *imbube* are the names used as *hlonipha* terms to differentiate the king of the forest from that of the Zulu.

Mdletshe, an *imbongi* of the present king mentioned that the lion is highly respected in Zulu society because it represents their king. Since the lion shares the same names with their king, the lion's name is never uttered overtly during the hunt. The hunter, who sees the lion first has to shout with the following exclamation: "*ubonakele!*" (he has been seen!) which implies that the great one of the forest has manifested himself. This "*ubonakele!*" is a salute of honour to the king of the forest. According to Mdletshe it is like the "*Bayethe*" (Long live the king) which the Zulu proclaim with loud voices on the appearance of their king. For the hunter, this exclamation is a way of showing honour to the animal that is usually referred to as the king of the forest. McVeigh (2000:2) states: "Lions deserve the name 'king of the jungle'. Large, strong, and fast the lion is an intelligent predator."

The kingly status of a lion is also reflected in the folktale, UNogwaja Nebhubesi:

*"Nkosi yamakhosi kwenzeka kanjani ukuba inkosi enkulu kangaka izisebenzele yodwa le misebenzi yokupheka nokwakha indlu na?"* (King of kings, how does this happen that you being the greatest king do all these tasks of cooking and building a house yourself?) (Canonici, 1993:18)

### 5.1.1 Young Shaka and the lion

Tradition has it that Shaka killed a lion when he was still staying amongst the Mthethwa. His contemporaries interpreted his deed as an indirect way of telling his foster father, Dingiswayo, that he was strong enough and mature to resume the Zulu throne because he had killed the most powerful animal with a single spear.

It is assumed that killing the lion was for Shaka a final test to display his inclinations as the most capable prospective king of the Zulu throne. During those days a contender for the Zulu throne had to be physically strong, and powerful and intelligent since he had to compete with more experienced kings in the neighbourhood.

When two rivals fight, the victor takes the praises, emotional and physical attributes of the victim. This means that when Shaka killed the lion he therefore empowered himself with its kingly status. As a result, when Shaka assumed the throne, he began to refer to himself as an *ingonyama* (a lion) that roared in the Zulu kingdom. Accordingly, Shaka's contemporary *imbongi* recorded his new title:

*Uyingonyama!* (Cope, 109; Shaka, line 306)  
(You are a lion!)

The following discussion attempts to find out what Shaka's mission was supposed to be as he referred to himself as a lion.

### 5.1.2 Shaka, the young lion

When Shaka came into power, there were other powerful kings such as Zwide of the Ndwandwe and Macingwane of the Mchunu clan. Macingwane, the king of Mchunu clan had a homestead which was called eNgonyameni (a place of a lion) because he also regarded himself as a lion. This means that there was a lion at eNgonyameni and one in KwaZulu. Both lions were often challenging each other to test each other's strength. About wild lions McVeigh [op.cit.:2] maintains:

“Male lions challenge one another for leadership of the pride. The victor often kills the weaker lion's children to maintain his leadership role in the pride.”

The question is: who was the most powerful lion? Was it Shaka or Macingwane and what

advantages does the powerful lion have? Parker (1995:112) draws our attention to what usually happens in the lion community:

“When the pride leading male becomes old and weak, he is challenged by a younger stronger male who will then take over.”

Let us consider this statement as applied to a human situation. Probably, Shaka was younger than Macingwane. Like a young lion Shaka challenged Macingwane who was a more experienced king than he was. Since Shaka referred to himself as a lion in the presence of a “senior” lion, Macingwane, he had to prove how strong he was to continue to claim this title. Shaka had to get rid of the threatening challenger. Shaka had to confront Macingwane to test the latter’s strength. This means that Shaka had to display his strength to maintain the title he had claimed for himself. When an individual displays his strength with power and authority, the Zulu describes such an act with the following proverb: *utonda esithebeni njengengonyama*. (he displays his power like a charging lion) In this rivalry between Macingwane and Shaka it appears that either Shaka or Macingwane had to prove to his subjects which of them deserved the title of a lion. Probably, their subjects were aware of the inevitable confrontation between them as Shaka’s *imbongi* proclaims:

*Oce! ugwayi kuMacingwan’eNgonyameni,  
UMacingwane wawulandula,  
Wawuzikholisile;  
Usineke-suduka lapha kuMacingwane. (Cope, 103; Shaka, lines 213-215)  
(He who asked for snuff from Macingwane of Ngonyameni,  
Macingwane, said he had none,  
He gave himself trouble,  
The persistent one, you move away from Macingwane.)*

### 5.1.3 A need for protection

The reason for Shaka’s challenges towards Macingwane can be traced from Senzangakhona’s *izibongo*:

*Uthi lwempundu,  
Obeluhlal'izikhova,  
Luhlal'uMacingwane waseNgonyameni.* Cope, 79; Senzangakhona, lines 54-56)  
(Stake forming the gate-post of Nomgabhi,  
On which owls perched,  
On which Macingwane of Ngonyameni sat.)

For the *imbongi* Macingwane was also an owl which implies that Macingwane's power was based on his evil omen because an owl is one of the most powerful familiars of the witch. As a result, owls are severely feared in Zulu society because they represent threat and they also work for the destruction of society together with their owners. According to Krige in *Biyela* [op.cit.:73] when an owl hoots near a hut, it is believed to forbode evil or death because it is the messenger of some *umthakathi*. Msimang (1981:73) maintains: "In Zulu culture, *isikhova* (an owl) represents that which causes misfortune."

Prior to Shaka's reign Macingwane had longed threatened the safety of the Zulu throne. This situation gives us an allusion that in the presence of Macingwane the Zulu were insecure. It is presumed that they were desperate for a leader that would rescue them from Macingwane and his evil omens.

"The role of the male lions is to defend their pride's territory. They do this by pacing around it, by roaring, by marking trees and paths with their urine."  
Parker, [op.cit: 112]

Like a leader of the lion community whose primary duty is to defend its subjects, Shaka too had a responsibility to protect his subjects from Macingwane's evil omens. Macingwane had to be driven further away from Shaka's territory. It appears that this defeat made Macingwane flee to give the status of a lion to the younger one, namely Shaka. After this incident it is said that Macingwane fled to Msinga where his descendants under the leadership of Phakade are presently found because he could not stand the heat of the Zulu lion. This means that Shaka weighed Macingwane and found him lacking.



It appears that being a leader involves responsibility. In other words a lion represents the one who comes to the fore to take control in every critical situation that puts his or her subjects in jeopardy. It further represents an individual that does not display his or her power and authority only for his or her own glory and honour but for the welfare of those under his or her rule. It represents the one who goes out of himself or herself for the good of others.

*Ingwe idla ngamabala.* (a leopard attracts people by its spots) is a proverb which means that people admire you for the good you do. In this context it can mean that a good leader is determined by the degree of vigour, sacrifices and energy he displays for the welfare of those under his or her care. This alludes to the fact that a leader has to win the hearts and respect of those he or she leads by the sacrifice he undergoes for their sake.

#### 5.1.4 The claws of a lion

The primary roles of a male lion in its community has already been mentioned in the previous pages. In this section we will specifically look at the symbolic aspect of its claws around the king's neck.

When one looks at the king's neck from afar the claws of a lion around it looks like a little fine 'fence'. A fence represents security and protection. With the claws the male lion protects itself as it transmits its power onto its victim. Who can dare attack a person who is protected by the king of the jungle? It is presumed that for the king to wear these claws is to tell his enemies that he is not an easy target. He is a lion in disguise that should not be provoked.

An adult male lion grows an impressive and luxurious mane on the back of its neck which is thought to protect the head and neck areas from injury during fighting. The claws of the lion instill great fear in the mind of the onlookers because they are the very claws that the king of the jungle uses in grabbing his prey.

It is also thought that the claws of a lion at the base of the Zulu king's neck represent this protective mane. These claws are a symbolic protection to the king.

## 5.2 Why the leopard?

Fierce fighting skills and strength seem to be the most dominant characteristics which associate the leopard with a lion. Both cats are the epitome of strength which makes them formidable predators. However, Hinde (1993: 95) draws our attention to the other prominent characteristics of a leopard which seem to be lacking in a lion: "Beauty, grace and power are blended in the leopard as in no other animal." {African Wildlife Foundation, [op.cit.:2]} maintains that leopards have a good sense of smell.

Bheki Njoko, a ranger, mentioned that the leopard is not a provocative animal by nature. It is always tidy and its skin does not have scratches like that of a lion which fights very often. He mentioned that when the leopard comes across a human being it usually looks down or turns its eyes from that person and walks away. He also mentioned that male leopards in particular are solitary animals. From Bheki Njoko's point of view males have a good reason for staying away from their family members. He said that the cubs behave the same way as human children. They are noisy, playful and enjoy provoking or teasing other animals. This type of behaviour may upset the neighbours as well as the enemies of the adult leopards. For example, if little cubs make too much noise the adult leopards may not be able to hear or see the predators from a distance. This can jeopardise the security of the entire family because family members may be exposed to danger or attacked at the same time. According to Njoko it is during such situations that male leopards fight with ferocity. He further testified that when it is provoked it fights to kill. About the leopard the following proverb says: *IsiPasithintwa*. (A leopard is never touched) because once provoked it retaliates viciously. It is said when Shaka was provoked he would react like a leopard.

It appears that staying in solitude helps the male leopard to avoid unnecessary fights, unlike the lion which is often seen roaring with its thunder-like voice as if looking for someone to devour.

### 5.2.1 The leopard's fur coat and its symbolism

“The leopards have long been preyed upon by man. Their soft, dense, beautiful fur has been used for ceremonial robes and coats.” {African Wildlife Foundation, [ibid.:2]}

Mutwa (1997:12-13) states:

“The leopard and the cheetah were regarded as sacred animals among the African people. The king of the Zulu was traditionally the protector and high guardian of all leopards, cheetah and tiger cats in the entire Natal area... Only princes and members of the Royal family were permitted to kill the leopard... A claw -bracelet consisting of 29 leopard claws belongs to a Zulu king. The ritual hunting of such an animal was limited to two kills a year. And was only conducted by a king. The *ingwe* (leopard) was believed to be both a physical and a spiritual entity. A claw from every leopard killed during a hunt had to be fitted into a bangle that belonged to a king.

The Zulu king wears the leopard's skin around his shoulders as his robe of honour during national ceremonies. Looking at the king from a distance with a leopard's coat around his shoulders the former appears as if he is carrying the body of a leopard. The leopard's coat with its fabulous, luxurious and fascinating colour instills a sense of admiration in the hearts of onlookers. When this coat is worn by the king it attracts the people to come closer towards the king to admire his royal regalia. The leopard's skin from a Zulu point of view represents beauty. And a thing of beauty remains for ever. It is such beauty that the Zulu aspire for their king

The representation of a lion and a leopard in the traditional attire of the Zulu king shows that the Zulu need both big cats for their strength in the presentation of their king. However, the

inclusion of a leopard with its beauty, integrity, luxurious fragrance and grace in the creation of the symbol of the Zulu king is an indirect way of complementing a lion as it lacks some of the qualities that the leopard has. According to Zulu thought it appears that strength and fighting techniques alone without integrity are not sufficient for the formation of an image of an ideal leader.

### 5.3 A symbolic combination of a lion and a leopard

The other animal that equally enjoys the similar status as the lion in the Zulu royal house, is *ingwe* (a leopard). The *hlonipha* (respect) name for leopard is *isilo*. A Zulu king is also referred to as *isilo*. References to *isilo* abound in *izibongo* of the kings who came after Shaka. For instance in *izibongo* of the present King, Zwelithini, the *imbongi* proclaims:

*Nani MaNdebele seniyawuguga nidelile!*  
*Senike nabona izinyane lesilo sikaNdaba... Isilo esafika eMelika sangcweka*  
*noMohammed Ali, inkosi yesibhakela.* (Sithole, 1982:125-131)  
(And you Ndebeles you will die after having seen the cub of the leopard of Ndaba. The leopard that came to America and played boxing with Mohammed Ali, the king of boxing)

In Shaka's behaviour the *imbongi* figures out the characteristics of both the lion and the leopard.

*Uyisilo! Uyingonyama!* Cope, 109, Shaka; line 306  
(You are a leopard! You are a lion!)

As Shaka had considerable prowess in war, it is probable that when he fought in war he also fought with vigour like the two formidable predators, namely the lion and the leopard.

The following idiom also has something to say about these two big cats: *kubambene ingwe nengonyama*. (it is a battle between the leopard and a lion) According to this idiom these two animals have the same weight in the scale since they are both endowed with superior

strength, which also makes them fierce and formidable fighters. In other words this idiom tells us that both the lion and the leopard are equals in almost every characteristic. As result, a fight between them becomes the most terrifying scene. The proverb that clearly describes a rivalry of individuals with equal power is: *zindala zombili*. (they are both old enough) which means that they are both equals.

Zihlahlazemithi Cele, an *inyanga*, mentioned that parts of the body of the lion and leopard were used by *izinyanga* of war as *umuthi* (medicine) to instill bravery and energy to warriors before going to war. This meant double-empowering the warriors as both animals are imbued with superior strength. It is said that the warriors too were expected to fight in the same way as these large cats without looking back when faced with an opponent.

Probably, Shaka's warriors were imbued with such magical powers derived from the two large cats.

There is a saying in Zulu which goes thus: *ingwe ayilali yodwa*, which means that a leopard never dies alone. This means that if it is attacked and gets a fatal wound, it ensures that before it dies at least one of its attackers dies together with it.

### 5.3.1 The Zulu king's attire and its symbolism

The combination of a lion and a leopard is also recognised in the traditional attire of the Zulu king. During traditional ceremonies the king wears the skin of a male leopard on the shoulders and a necklace made of the claws of a male lion on the neck. On his wrist he also wears the claws of a leopard.

The other animal that will be examined in the next discussion is the buffalo as it also stands on top of the list of animals commonly known as the favourites of the Zulu royal house and

closely associated with Shaka.

#### 5.4 **The general behaviour of a buffalo**

Bheki Njoko, a ranger, testified that buffaloes in a group are not very dangerous when compared to the old ones that have been expelled from the group by young ones. The buffaloes that have been expelled live a lonely life. As a result, they become violent in a way that they spare no one coming to their environment. Such buffaloes are also not easy to hunt because they are very obstinate and fear no gun. Njoko mentioned one incident where six rangers, each with a gun, went to hunt a buffalo. They hunted the whole day but came back with no buffalo. He emphasised that having a gun does not make a buffalo an easy target. According to Njoko a slight mistake when one hunts a buffalo means a death sentence. Njoko also mentioned that it is of no use climbing onto a tree because it tears it with its strong horns and smashes it with its head until its victim falls onto the ground.

Other informants mentioned that when its victim is lying helpless on the ground, it urinates all over its body. The informants also mentioned that the buffalo's urine is hot and it can cause severe burns on one's skin. If its victim is still alive and makes an attempt to run away due to the burning effect of the urine, the buffalo smashes its victim to death with its sharp feet.

#### 5.5 **A buffalo and its ferocity**

*Ungibambele inyathi ngophondo* (She/He is holding a buffalo for me by the horn). The strongest weapon that a buffalo uses in attacking its victims are its ridged horns that grow straight out from the head or curve downwards and then up. Holding a buffalo by its horn implies putting one into a most dangerous situation.

The following proverbs also tell us something about the behaviour and attitude of a buffalo:

- *Inyathi iyaweya umuthi* (a buffalo underestimates a tree) When a buffalo is angry it usually behaves like an elephant. It also has a tendency of smashing huge trees with its horns. When overcome with ferocity, even the biggest trees in the wild become ‘tiny plants’ in its eyes.
- A tree here represents someone or something that is huge, powerful and fearful. But for an angry buffalo nothing is too powerful that it can be scared of.
- *Inyathi ibuzwa kwabaphambili* (a buffalo is inquired from the people who are at the place an individual goes to). This proverb might have originated from this fear of a buffalo. It appears that the whereabouts of a buffalo was the first thing that every traveler had to remember before leaving the house. It is presumed that if people who originated this proverb were literate, they would have made huge posters written in bold to warn travelers about these fatal animals.

The above picture about a buffalo from both proverbs and the informants leaves us with a frightening picture about the buffalo. It appears that wherever there is a buffalo people feel insecure. According to Hinde [op.cit.:12], hunters fear no animal as much as a buffalo bull in a reed-bed. {African Wildlife Foundation, [op.cit.:1]} states:

“Buffaloes have earned a bad reputation from hunters and other people who come in close contact with them. They are often accused of deliberate savagery.”

About the buffalo in Shaka’s *izibongo* the *imbongi* proclaims:

*Inyath’ ejame ngomkhonto phansi koMzimvubu,  
AmaMpond’ esaba nokuyehlela.* (Cope, 95, Shaka; lines:113-114)  
(Buffalo that stood glaring with a spear on the banks of Mzimvubu,  
And the Mpondos feared to come down to it)

According to the *imbongi* the buffalo that attacked the Mpondos was more ferocious. *Imbongi*'s buffalo had an additional weapon that is, the spear. An image of a buffalo with a spear in its hand instills more fear because even an ordinary buffalo is terribly feared.

About Shaka's spear the *imbongi* proclaims again:

*Ugaqa libomvu nasekuphatheni.* (Cope, 89; Shaka, line 15)  
(Spear that is red even on the handle)

This statement alludes to the fact that Shaka's spear spared no one when provoked. {African Wildlife Foundation, [op.cit.:1]} states: "Buffaloes are unpredictable and can be dangerous if cornered or wounded."

In this context, our sympathy goes with the desperate Mpondos who were confronted by a spear- buffalo. It is presumed they were greatly scared as they were standing in between the spear and the buffalo, which means that they were between life and death. Probably, the Mpondos did not know whether Shaka was going to spare them or kill them as he was also as unpredictable as the buffalo of the wild. The Mpondos had no alternative. As a result, they had to run away for their lives as the proverb says: *kusinda ezakwaGwala* which means being a coward usually saves one from the worse fate.

There are many stories told about Shaka with regard to his unpredictability. During the death of his mother everyone in the land was supposed to mourn. It is said that people were not even allowed to plant or to milk their cows. People starved.

Gala of Nodade of the Biyela clan decided to confront Shaka to tell him that people were dying of hunger. His family discouraged him to face Shaka because they knew that the latter would send him to his death without trial. When Gala left, his family started mourning his death because they knew his death was inevitable. To their surprise Shaka thanked Gala for



his bravery and advice. He gave him a herd of cattle. It is said that people concluded that predicting Shaka's motives and action was quite hard.

An elephant is another popular 'Zulu royal' animal.

## 5.6 The mighty elephant

"*Wena weNdlovu!*" (You of the Elephant!) is always heard when the Zulu salute their king either prior to the beginning or in between or at the end of the ceremony. Sometimes it is pronounced by the audience as applause of appreciation when the king says something impressive. The question which always comes to my mind when I hear this salute is: who is this Elephant who the king belongs to and why is this individual associated with an elephant? Chadwick (1983: 23): seems to give us a clue:

"The degree of respect that many tribes had for elephant is reflected in the terms of praise for great chiefs and warriors, such as Shaka Zulu whose ultimate accolade was that of Oh Great Mighty Elephant of the Zulu" while his mother, Nandi was praised as The Mighty She-Elephant!"

Through the mouth of the *imbongi* the Zulu see an elephant in Shaka.

*Uyindlovu!* (Cope, 109; Shaka, line, 307)  
(You are an elephant!)

This statement leaves us with an open question: which characteristics associated Shaka with an elephant?

### 5.6.1 A powerful memory and intelligence

There is a big number of characteristics of an elephant which the informants associated with

Shaka's behaviour. Some of them are a good memory, intelligence, power, revengefulness and being a leader.

There are also several stories told about Shaka and his amazing memory. It is said that when he was a child he told his mother's people at eLangeni that he would return to them to exact payment in revenge for the ill-treatment he and his mother suffered at their hands. Tradition has it that they were the first in the short list to be tormented by Shaka.

He also returned to the Mthethwa clan to thank them for the good they did to him while he was destitute. It is said that Dingiswayo put him under the custodian of the house of Shangane. When there was a family feud about who would follow Dingiswayo, Shaka put the kingdom under the leadership of the house of Shangane as a token of gratitude. The present descendants of Shangane under chief Temba still interpret this deed of Shaka as a token of appreciation to the Mthethwa clan for what they did for him when he was homeless.

Bheki Njoko, a ranger, shares his personal experience with regard to the social behaviour of an elephant:

There is an incident that I want to share with you concerning an elephant's good memory. We have a record of this incident in the chronicles of the Umfolozi Game Reserve. In 1984 a group of elephant calves arrived at this game reserve. An old rhino killed one of these young elephants. It is amazing that in 1987 these elephants came across this rhino that had killed one of them. The rhino could not escape. They ruthlessly took revenge for the other elephant by killing the rhino.

This incident can be chewed together with the words of Chadwick [op.cit.:28] as he states: "An elephant never forgets." Njoko also emphasized that no matter how long the time past after the incident, an elephant never forgets whatever befell it, either good or bad.

According to the informants Shaka was an elephant with two legs because he too never forgot anything that befell him particularly during his hard childhood days. Njoko also interpreted

the action of these elephants as a sign of exceptional intelligence because after a long time they could still identify the rhino which had killed one of them.

“The elephant is distinguished by its high level of intelligence.” {African Wildlife Foundation, [op.cit:4]} An aspect of intelligence can be identified in Shaka’s *izibongo* where he is referred to as *ilemb’ eleq’ amanye ngokukhalipha* which means that Shaka surpassed all others in wisdom. Up to the present day a reference to Shaka as *ilembe* is the one that is commonly used in matters concerning Shaka.

### 5.6.2 Provocation and revenge

One of the characteristics of the elephant that people associate with Shaka’s behaviour and attitude is that of revenge. According to the informants there is no chance of escaping the rage of a provoked elephant. When an elephant attacks, it makes sure that its victim suffers a death sentence. When the victim tries to hide in a hole, it digs up the soil and buries the victim alive. An individual may attempt to climb up on a huge tree with the hope of saving his or her life. For an elephant filled with rage a tree is no source of refuge because the elephant can tear it to pieces with its tusks and smash it with its feet. It is also said that running does not help much because it usually pulls up branches and throws them at the victim so that he or she falls down. When the victim is lying on the ground its feet are the main weapon to punish the vulnerable victim.

The informants also claim that the following proverb: *indlov’ edl’ abasondezeli* (an elephant that eats those who bring things closer to him) originated with Shaka because his reaction towards provocation was deadly like that of an elephant. Even those who were thought to be the closest to him were often not spared from the execution when they had wronged. They had to suffer his justice like anyone else who could have provoked him.

*Indlov'eth' imuka babeyilandel' abakwaLanga,  
Ibuyis' inhloko yadl' amadoda. (Cope, 103; Shaka, lines:211-212)  
(An elephant which was leaving and the people of Langa followed it,  
It turned its head and ate heads of men)*

This stanza takes us back to the days of bloody wars between Shaka and Zwide, the king of the Ndwandwe. Shaka and Zwide were both powerful elephants. Although they were both powerful, Zwide lost and the formidable Shaka ate up a huge number of his warriors.

### 5.6.3 An elephant, the provider

There are many instances that I have seen on television where an elephant shows great concern for other animals. One narrator on television described the elephant as a 'destructive creator'. It sounds paradoxical. During dry seasons life is difficult for the wild animals because vegetation becomes scarce. Edible branches and twigs are out of reach for the majority of the herbivorous animals. I have observed a few times an elephant pulling down a huge tree to make it accessible to all the other herbivores. The elephant usually does this when for example, there is a group of zebras around. It appears that the other herbivores appreciate what the elephant does because as soon as the tree is lying on the ground they all flock together to enjoy themselves on the green portions of the tree.

The tree has been destroyed but the starving herbivores have been fed. They have survived death which could have been caused by starvation due to a dry season. The element of destruction and creation that the narrator talked about in the description of an elephant can now be understood through this example.

Here is another example from the Namibian elephants. The elephants of Namibia grow up in a desert where water sources can literally run out. Animals can be seen going long distances looking for a place where they can find water to drink.

I was deeply impressed when I saw a group of elephants coming together to dig the ground with an aim of finding water. They scooped the soil with both their feet and their trunks. What touched me again was that when water had come out, other animals flocked together around the little pool elephants have provided for them to quench their thirst. When the elephants had finished drinking, they proceeded with their journey leaving water flowing as a future resource for other animals.

Who will think that even frogs do sometimes look up to elephants for help? When it rains water runs down quickly on the ground. I once observed that on rainy days the elephant's feet leave holes on the ground where water can form little pools of water. These little pools of water then become the breeding places for frogs.

The informants pointed out that they were aware of the fact that a lion is called the king of the jungle. They mentioned that the lion might have received this title due to the fact that it is fearful. A number of informants argued that an elephant should have been called the king of the jungle because it is considerate, protective and caring. As a result, it is well-respected by other animals because it is sociable and protective even to other animals that are not members of its community.

When elephants are around, lions do not do as they please with other animals because the lions are afraid of elephants. Animals like giraffes, impala and zebras are common targets of lions. This could be the reason why these animals often graze together with a group of elephants.

Shaka was no different from the lion. He was also fearful. But an element of protection cannot be left out in this context because with his formidable army, he protected an insignificant and vulnerable Zulu clan with an elephant power. The tiny Zulu clan had been an easy target for kings like Macingwane. Due to Shaka's protective wings the small Zulu clan eventually

became a mighty nation. No king would dare attack it in the presence of Shaka.

### 5.7 The aftermath

Tradition has it that Dingane together with his brothers and Mbopha, Shaka's servant formed a conspiracy against Shaka which led to the tragic death of the latter.

*Ithol' elinsizwa lakokaDonda,  
Elihambe likhahlel' amany' amathole,  
Izingazi zaphuma ngamaphumulo!  
ULanga laphum' endlebeni yendlovu,  
Yaminza-k' indlovu. (Rycroft & Ngcobo, Dingane (1988:94) lines:423-  
425,428)  
(Hornless calf of the daughter Donda,  
That went and kicked the other calves,  
And blood flowed from their nostrils!  
Sun that rose up out of the elephant's ear,  
Then the elephant drowned.)*

In the above stanza the *imbongi* illustrates to us a picture of Dingane and how he killed the other male members of the royal house. The part of the stanza that seems to draw our attention is the one that tells us about the drowning of the elephant. This statement indicates that amongst the royal princes that Dingane killed, there was an 'elephant' which is said to have drowned, probably in his own blood. The stanza continues to clarify the point that the blood came from the nostrils of the victim whom Dingane had kicked.

It is presumed that the elephant that the *imbongi* refers to here, is Shaka because tradition has it that after his death, Dingane built himself a huge homestead near the Umkhumbane River in the Mahlabathini District which he named Umgungundlovu *Ondukuzibomvu* (which is of red sticks) as a living memory of his victory over the most powerful elephant, Shaka.

The verb *Ngunga* means to conspire, encircle or surround. Nouns such as *Umgungu* or *isigungu* are derived from this verb. The name Umgungundlovu therefore, causes

suspicion if we consider that Shaka's death was an outcome of *ukungunga* (a conspiracy) It is assumed that Dingane was indirectly telling the Zulu nation that his success in achieving the royal throne was an outcome of his conspiracy against Shaka. *Ukungunga* also means to encircle. This name of Dingane's homestead gives us an allusion that Shaka was the stronger elephant than Dingane. As a result, Dingane feared it and decided to find help. An issue of conspiracy probably came in this way.

*Indlov' iwile. Zonk' izizwe zofika zizoxebula* (An elephant has fallen. All nations will come to strip it off). This proverb is relevant in this context.

Dingane did not only name his homestead after Shaka, but he also took his mighty kingdom which means that he took everything that belonged to Shaka. Literally speaking, he stripped off the fallen elephant. The stripping off of the fallen elephant did not end with Dingane. After the death of Shaka, the Afrikaners as well as the British also came to strip off the fallen elephant. They divided Shaka's land between themselves to get a lion's share.

## **Conclusion**

Msimang [op.cit:71]: states:

“ While an image may be used purely as a symbol, on occasions it may initially be used as a metaphor but by its recurrent use in a particular sense it then graduates as a symbol.”

Images of wild animals such as the lion, leopard, elephant and buffalo tend to be over-worked in both proverbs and praise-poems. Consistent reference to these heroic animals has earned them a symbolic status in the Zulu royal house, probably since the reign of Shaka. These images appear as transition images. These images of fierce and powerful animals depicted in both proverbs and praise-poems reflect a great change in the social system of Zulu society

under the heroic leader, Shaka, who superimposed a kingship and a military system where the ideal of dominance, forcefulness, fearlessness and national glory, and loyalty to the king took precedence. Interestingly, the big four of the wild are used as metaphors to suggest Shaka's courage which was the source of his achievement.

To conclude: courage is taking a position and doing what is right, even at the risk of some loss. It means being neither reckless nor cowardly, but facing up to our duties. It includes physical courage, intellectual courage to make decision on the basis of evidence, and moral courage to stand up for our principles.



## Chapter 6

### **THE FAMILY IS THE PLACE WHERE CHILDREN ARE INITIATED INTO THE SYSTEMS OF RELATIONS AND BROUGHT UP IN ACCORDANCE WITH SOCIETY'S ETHICAL DEMANDS**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter begins by exploring bird metaphors emanating from both bird- hunting and *ukwelusa* (herding) experiences to find out how Zulu society uses bird images in proverbial metaphors as a paradigm to regulate the conduct of members of society, particularly young herdsmen.

However, an average person of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and people who grew up in urban areas might have difficulty in identifying with these experiences dealing with the boys' activities in the veld because these might be completely alien to them. Attempts are made to present the reader with brief origins of these bird metaphors by letting a few informants share their personal experiences to give the reader a background to the veld activities, especially the hunting of birds.

Some of the proverbs selected for this chapter also reflect habits and practices of society that seem to be tradition-based. For example, there are proverbs that reflect a picture of a society that is based on stratification. There are two significant levels of this stratification, namely: the youth at the foundation, and the adults on the top who act as facilitators of children in the teaching of practices which appear as foundation stones for the promotion of social values. Such social values have to be internalised in the child's mind by adult members of the family as early as possible.

“If proper attitudes and behaviour are not learned early, problems can

mushroom with even worse consequences when children are older...Many parents will also want to share with their children deeply held religious and moral convictions as a foundation for ethical behaviour.” (Edwin J. and Alice B. Delattre, 1993:2)

The adults have also the responsibility of assisting the youth in sifting good from bad. Young people should also be helped in abiding by established norms of society. The culture of sharing food does not come automatically but it needs someone to implement and promote amongst members of society, especially at a young age so that children grow up with the habit of caring for and sharing food with those who are under-privileged for the maintenance of healthy social relationships amongst young and old members of society. Pottow (1990:137) states: “Sharing food forms community harmony.”

Through a critical analysis of selected proverbs, this chapter further sets out to identify the significance of sharing a sacrificed beast amongst the members of community. From a Zulu perspective this kind of sharing seems to be a symbolic representation of a shared effort amongst the living members of society who strive towards the promotion of a spirit of togetherness, welfare and survival for their society. Pottow [op.cit.:134] further states:

“ The sacrifice is the means whereby the living come into contact with their ancestral spirits, in order to ask for favours or thank them for their blessings.”

This means that a sacrificed beast is also used as a symbolic link between the living community and the community of the dead. Through a ceremonious ritual this beast is first dedicated to the ancestors or the community of the dead at the cattle-byre as a way of inviting them to come, to share.

### **6.1 General guidelines for young bird-hunters**

During traditional times there were no formal institutions of education, where children could attend classes to acquire knowledge about different aspects of life. Boys used to spend most

part of the day in the veld, herding cattle and goats, playing games, learning both customs and traditions, hunting birds, etc. Fortunately, there are still people who have personal experiences of life of boys in the veld. The following informants will tell us why *ukwelusa* (herding) was such a great adventure for boys.

Mpumelelo Mbatha on 23.6.99:

When we were boys we enjoyed *ukwelusa* (herding) as both an educational and recreational adventure. In the veld we learnt many things such as hunting skills that we could not have learnt anywhere else. For example, we were told that when we had found a brooding- bird, we were not supposed to tell anyone else about its whereabouts. It was said that mother-bird flees when someone talks about it especially around the fireplace.

T.W. Mabuya on 5.7.99:

As experienced boys we knew places where most birds used to hide themselves. Tall trees near rivers, cracks on rocks and thick grass were most favourite places for brooding birds. During hunting these were the places we targeted. Brooding- birds were an easy target as they were confined in the nests nurturing their young. But when the chicks were still too small, mother-bird was spared. When you had found a bird, it was essential to keep it to yourself so that nobody else would come to interfere with your 'own' bird. Mother-bird in particular is very sensitive to human scent. If it suspects that some people interfere with its surroundings, it flees. Therefore, one had to keep the whereabouts of his bird to his own heart, lest other boys stole his bird because every boy wanted to go home with a bird in his hand as a sign of achievement. Bird-hunting involves a lot of competition.

According to oral testimonies bird-hunting is the most popular game that boys enjoy with great interest during their stay in the veld. However, there are rules that young hunters have to comply with. For example, a recruit to bird-hunting is first told that a bird he finds in the nest is regarded as his own 'property,' and that he has to look after it and protect it from any harassment. This reminds me of what I used to hear from my brothers. When they were going to check on their birds, they would say that they were going to *ukondla* (to feed). But they

never said exactly where their birds were. They also did not specify whether they actually fed their birds with wild fruits or anything that birds enjoy most, or they only checked on their safety. They were very secretive about these things.

The following discussion sets out to examine the rules for hunting birds and their impact on human social relationships from a proverbial point of view.

### 6.1.1 **The fireplace**

*Inyon'ayikhulunyelw'eziko.* (It is not right to talk about a bird around the fireplace) It has been already mentioned that a bird in the nest flees when someone talks about it around the fireplace. But what is the underlying implication of this proverb? As an attempt to answer this question, our discussion will examine the implication of the fireplace as mentioned in the above proverb.

A theory of a bird that flees from its nest seems to derive from a Zulu belief that birds have a supernatural ability to depict danger through their senses. As result, they seem to be very sensitive to places that inflict pain on them. A fireplace is one of these places. At the fireplace boys share their achievements of the day with great joy, while the dead bodies of the birds are lying on the wood in the fire.

According to this theory, a fireplace represents danger to the birds, which means that birds are scared of this place, as humans fear the gallows. This also means that at a mention of the word fireplace, birds flee for their lives. This is what Zulu young bird-hunters grow up believing in.

### 6.1.2 **Learning to keep a secret**

Zulu boys love birds and they enjoy being close to them. But why did Zulu society come up

with this theory, and was there an underlying problem that it faced with regard to boys and their relationship with birds? It is presumed that the theory of a fleeing bird from its nest when one talks about it around the fireplace came up with the adults, who basically had two problems with boys. Probably, when boys start hunting birds, they are still inexperienced as regards the life of birds. As a result they may not be aware that their interference with birds in the nests is a severe harassment, which can cause the bird to flee. The departure of mother-bird leaving its young behind puts young chicks in jeopardy.

The adults might have come up with this theory, which has developed into a proverb for two reasons. Firstly, they wanted to curb the boys from harassing the birds during their brooding season through curiosity. Secondly, it might have been a psychological strategy, which the adults adopted to train young herdsmen to keep a secret. The aspect of keeping a secret and the effects of breaking it prematurely will be critically examined in the following discussion.

### **6.1.3 The effects of a broken bond of trust: the nest**

When the bird is in its nest, it makes sure that none of its enemies sees it. In this way, the nest provides it with the protection and security it needs during the brooding season. Normally, a brooding bird spends most of the day in its nest. It might leave it for a short time when it is looking for food or water. But when it sees that certain individuals interfere with its nest and its life is in danger, it flees.

From a Zulu point of view, a nest represents a human chest, while the bird, which is enclosed in it, stands for a secret or a delicate information. Before the bird runs out of its nest, the nest should first open up to let it go. The secret information is kept in the chest. This information cannot go out of the chest before the latter opens up. It is important to mention that we are not talking about a bird going out of its nest to look for food or water. The focus is on an image of a bird fleeing for good from its nest which is interpreted in Zulu society as the opening of the

chest of a confidant when revealing secret information, which has been confided to him or her with all trust.

This metaphor makes a person imagine the condition of a fleeing bird, which goes to places that are unfamiliar and uncondusive to its safety. This seems inconvenient for a bird, which has been enjoying the security of its nest. This gives us an allusion that the bird suffers great pain after leaving its warm nest and friendly environment.

The challenging situation that the bird faces after leaving its nest is meant to illustrate to us the degree of destruction caused by the reckless handling of matters of importance in our social relationships. According to Zulu society this wandering of a bird is interpreted as a reckless spreading of delicate and sensitive information, which reaches people who are not supposed to hear it.

The reckless revealing of delicate information by a confidante often gives rise to rumours which make the matter more complicated. On the other side the one who confided his or her personal matter to a particular trustee suffers severe emotional stress due to the degradation of his or her reputation, especially when the matter involves something disgraceful.

From a human point of view, revealing of secret information prematurely, and without the consent of a person involved is a crime, which usually leads to the breaking of the bond of trust in social relationships. When the bond of trust is broken, love is automatically threatened, since true love is based on trust.

It is presumed that Zulu society used this metaphor of a fleeing bird as a means to teach boys at a young age to handle delicate matters with absolute care and to train them to act responsibly when dealing with issues that might degrade other peoples' reputation as well as their social status.

The following discussion looks at the other element, which deals with the relationship between the honey-guide and the honey-retrievers.

## 6.2 Regulations for honey- retrievers

“The honey-guide’s favourite food is the larvae of the honeybee. But he cannot get all the larvae because they are safely hidden inside the bee-hive, which is usually in a hollow of a tree. African people who find the hive in this way take the honey for themselves and then always make sure that they leave the larvae outside the hive for the honey-guide to eat. Both the honey-guide and the people benefit from the relationship.” (Hes, 1991:21)

Bryant (1949:349) maintains:

“They loved their honey none the less; and their herd-boys were quite diligent in their search for it. They were sometimes led to it by that useful bird, the Honey-guide, which they always rewarded with fragments of the comb.”

It appears that the sharing of this free gift of nature between Zulu society and the honey-guide has been a long- standing tradition. Great concern for the honey-guide, which in Zulu is known as *inhlava* or *ingede*, is also reflected in a number of Zulu proverbs. For example, the following proverbs give some guidelines to those who come into contact with this famous bird:

*Ungayishayi inhlava ngoju.* (Never throw honey in the face of the honey-guide)

*Ungayishayi ingede ngoju.* ((Never throw honey in the face of the honey-guide)

*Inhlava ayishaywa.* (The honey-guide is never beaten)

*Inhlava iyabekelwa.* (One must keep something for the honey-guide)

The above stipulations about the honey-guide from the proverbs make it necessary to invite the experienced herdsman and hunters to share their experiences as they might shed a

clear insight on the honey-guide's social behaviour and its relation to humans.

Zihlahlazemithi Cele on 10.3.99:

*Inhlava* (the honey-guide) is a bird that is of the size of *ungcede* (a fantail warbler). When the honey-guide wants honey, it looks for a place with humans. In most cases it finds either hunters or herdboys as they are often found in the veld. To draw their attention, it sings in a loud voice until someone pays attention to its sweet-sounding song. A person has to follow it until it stops at a certain place, only known to it. When it reaches its destination, it starts waving its wings and bows its head upon the exact spot with honeycombs.

I remember when we were still small boys, old people used to tell us that we had to leave some pieces of honeycombs for the honey-guides because it cannot get the honey for itself. This is why it calls out for someone to help it. If you eat all the honeycombs, it is said that the following time you come, it calls a snake to bite you because it does not like selfish people. Old people also said that it is not easy to notice when it is taking you to a dangerous place with a snake because it makes the same beautiful sound it usually makes when calling you for honey.

The above proverbs and the oral testimonies have one element in common. They both emphasise the need for showing appreciation to the honey-guide by giving it small pieces of the honey-combs. The informants further mentioned that the honey-guide calls in a snake to punish those who do not give it anything.

“The popular names that both Tumbuka and Chewa give to the honey-guides are Solo and Nsolo respectively. But because of the unpredictability of this bird's call whether to fortune (a bees' nest) or to misfortune (a snake), it is both a friend and an enemy to humans in this regard.” (Mtonga in Sienaert, 1998:336)

In this context, a snake symbolises the hand of justice.

“Justice is a leveling factor: those who have must share, since mother-nature provides for all. The greedy who try to take advantage of the 'small fry' are



digging their own grave.” (Canonici, 1995:110)

If people are punished for being ungrateful to a non-human being, it shows that human society holds gratitude as one of the noblest of social values.

### 6.3 The value of gratitude

Bender (1992:22) observed how animals showed gratitude to each other:

“These are cattle egrets. They feed on flies and pests in the grazers’ fur. In return for a meal, the egrets remove the grazers’ irritating pests, and alert the herd when they spot lions or other predators.”

This statement gives us a good example of an altruistic behaviour between a benefactor and a beneficiary. An act of showing gratitude to one’s benefactor is considered as the noblest form of preserving old friendships and procuring new ones. It also promotes healthy social relationships where everyone is required to act responsibly without gaining at the expense of others.

An act of the honey-guide of helping other creatures who are not even members of its own community is meant to draw our attention towards members of society who suffer the effects of ingratitude. The honey-guide represents people who do tremendous works of charity, but due to their stigma of inferiority or unpopularity are despised. As a result, their good service is also taken as something which is not worth recognition. These people hunger for a simple word: *ngiyabonga* (I thank you). It is the greatest catalyst in our social relationships and to utter it even for services which might seem insignificant in themselves is ethical.

The following discussion is concerned with an aspect of teaching a child to share his or her meals with others.

## 6.4 A boy takes his bird home

*Inyoni ishayelwa abakhulu.* (A bird is killed for the superiors) Prior to a critical examination of this proverb, it is appropriate to invite the informants to share their knowledge with regard to its origin:

Buzetsheni Mdletshe on 6.4.99:

When we grew up, we were told that we should not eat the birds we kill in the veld. We had to take them home. Old people used to tell us that we had to get used to sharing little things like birds so that in future we can be able to share big things we will own. We were also told that giving a bird to your grandparents was a way of asking for a blessing.

Victor Khumalo on 20.2.99:

For a boy, it was not pleasing to take home a small bird like *ungcede* (fantail warbler). Large birds like *isagwaca* (quail) were taken home with pride to impress the adults. Killing a big bird was a sign that a boy was growing up towards manhood. Mind you, you were only given a head to eat.

The role played by a grandparent in the distribution of a boy's bird, and the eating of the head of the bird by the boy were the two most important elements that almost every informant came up with during an interview. These two elements also form our point of departure for the following discussion which attempts to examine the implication of the boy's act of taking his birds home, as well as the symbol of a bird from a Zulu point of view.

### 6.4.1 Learning to share

In almost every society grandparents enjoy staying with their grandchildren, sharing food with them and telling them stories. As a result, children often communicate more openly with their

grandparents than their own parents. In Zulu society this is easily noticeable as the people live in extended families, which allows children from different houses to congregate around their grandparents in one place.

There is something that comes to my mind as regard to the relationship between grandparents and their grandchildren. I still remember that when my half- brothers and my cousins came with their birds, they would first show them to my grandfather although their mothers were in the house. Younger children in the family would also follow them. Each of the boys who came with a bird would receive a head from his bird and my grandfather would take the rest and divide it amongst other small children who were not yet capable of hunting. Masson (1994:157) states:

“Another form of altruistic behaviour is to feed another animal or allow it to share one’s food. As lion-watchers have pointed out that old lionesses who no longer bear young and have worn or missing teeth can survive for years because the younger lions share their kills with them”.

This statement alludes to the fact that in a true altruistic relationship there should be always someone who is caring, sensitive and also willing to provide for those who are less fortunate.

#### **6.4.2 The role of a grandparent**

It has been already mentioned that a bird killed by a boy in the veld is given to a grandparent, who often gives the former a head to eat. The question is: why does the grandparent deprive the boy of his own bird, and what does this act imply? Covey (1990:38) states:

“Certainly, I should teach my daughter to share. The value of sharing is one of the most basic things we believe in.”

Mtiso-Mbinda in Healey (1996:254) states:

“A meal is perhaps the most basic and most ancient symbol of friendship, love and unity. Food and drink taken in common are obvious signs that life is shared in our [African] context, it is unusual for people to eat alone. Only a witch or wizard would do that. A meal is always a communal affair. The family normally eats together. Eating together is a sign of being accepted to share life and equality.”

Exclusion from the sharing of a meal is a sign of being an outcast because the relationship is in the eating together. Since the family is the place where children are initiated into the systems of relations and brought up in accordance with society's ethical demands, it is most appropriate that adult members of every family take the initiative in the internalisation of the essence of sharing in a child's mind as early as possible. Parents, in particular, should instill into a child's mind that well-shared meals beget a spirit of sharing social values.

It seems that the culture of sharing does not come automatically but it needs someone to implement it and to promote it amongst members of society. Mancini (1995:16) states:

“In many instances certain men and women of high regard were chosen to stand in as teachers in matters of national interest.”

The proverb says that a bird killed has to be given to the superiors. It is thought that the word '*abakhulu*' (superiors) in this context refers to adult members of society, whose primary duty is to ensure that children grow up with a spirit of sharing their possession with others. An image of a tiny bird that the boy gives away to be shared is meant to highlight the point that sharing is a simple social value, which can be practised anywhere, anytime and with anything, no matter how small that thing is whenever a need arises. One may ask: why do Zulu people emphasise the importance of sharing food to their children?

The essence of sharing food in Zulu society may derive from the fact that there are communal food rituals that usually call one to share his or her meals with other people who are not even members of his or her own family as the following discussion will show.

Adopting a habit of sharing meals with one's family members enables one to move towards the destination of togetherness, generosity and to contribute on wider family, that is, a community or society.

## 6.5 Invocation of the ancestors prior to a sacrifice

Nyembezi (1966:130) states:

“Leso silwane esihlatshelwa abangasekho sasethulwa kubona kuqala ngaphambi kokuba sihlatshwe, bese kuthiwa nakhu-ke ukudla kwenu esinzezele khona, dlanini.” (That beast which was slaughtered for the dead, was presented to them first before it was slaughtered, and here it would be said here is the food made for you, eat it)

One may ask why are the ancestors invoked? Mbiti (1969: 82) explains:

“ The living-dead are still ‘people’...They return to their families from time to time, and share meals with them, however symbolically.”

A sacrificed beast does not only become a consecrated entity, but it also signifies a mythical link between the living community and that of the dead. Since there is this attitude of sacredness in relation to the sacrificial beast, there are also strict norms and customs which regulate the way of serving and eating it. Krige (1950:56) maintains:

“ Different parts of a beast belong to different people in the kraal and no one else may have them.”

The propitiation of the ancestors is a firmly established ritual amongst members of Zulu society. It has to be conducted prior to the start of any ceremony, whether the ceremony is presided over by the king or an ordinary citizen. To illustrate a better picture with regard to the invitation of the ancestors prior to the start of a ritual, I want to share what I observed at eNyokeni Royal kraal.

In 1998 I witnessed a festival of the first fruits. After the king and the warriors had entered the kraal, there was great silence in the entire homestead. Lambert in his paper (1993:296) calls such a silence the holy silence. Breaking such a silence, two *izimbongi* began praising all the Zulu kings who are dead in a solemn tone. After this act of praise the king together with his warriors sang *amahubo esizwe* (national hymns) with great solemnity. This magnificent singing brought a religious tone to the entire homestead.

After the invocation of the ancestors the king sacrificed a bull and ordered the warriors to kill it by bare hands. According to custom such a beast should not carry a stabbed wound. Secondly, it had to be burnt whole in the centre of the kraal. Offering the beast to the community of the dead in its full state reminds us that according to a Zulu custom each part of the sacrificed beast represents a certain group of people in the community. This means that a sacrificed beast must reach them with all its parts intact to show respect to each group represented by each part. The king had to sacrifice other beasts to be eaten by the living community as it had been also invited to share in the sacrificed meat during the festival. This means that a sacrificed beast has to be shared amongst the members of society present. Healey [op.cit.:256] states:

“Africans will never eat alone, nor will they eat in front of another person without sharing what they have...the food religion connection goes back a very long time in human history. Food has been intertwined with religion and spirituality down through the centuries and is closely related to the deepest religious values.”

Because:

“The Zulu feel that greed is a sign of disorder and of bad behaviour. The counterpart of greed is generous hospitality, through which people share in whatever they have received as a gift from the ancestors. Eating together, sharing food and congenial conversation creates a community... Traditional culture shows a deep suspicion of anyone who, in a friendly and gregarious community such as the Zulu village, dares to eat alone.” Canonici [op.cit:103-104]

### 6.5.1 Supplication through music and dance

After the detailed procedures of the ritual had been completed I asked Buzetsheni Mdletshe, one of the *izimbongi*, about the singing and dancing that took place during the ritual. He explained that the praising of the late kings through national hymns and martial dance was meant to invite the ancestors to the festival because they are still part of us.

Buzetsheni Mdletshe further explained that the Zulu strongly believe that a supplication which is made in a form of praises, singing and dancing has more impact on the addressee. Mbiti [op.cit.:67] states:

“African peoples are very fond of singing. Many of the religious gatherings and ceremonies are accompanied by singing which not only helps to pass on religious knowledge from one person or group to another, but helps create and strengthen corporate feeling and solidarity... Music, singing and dancing reach deep into the innermost parts of African peoples, and many things come to the surface under musical inspiration.”

From a Zulu point of view ancestors are not God, not even gods but intermediaries of God. As intermediaries they praise, intercede and offer sacrifices to God on behalf of their descendants. Amongst their descendants, they are regarded as God’s spokespersons who transmit His messages to them and help them to honour Him through a good life. Mbiti [op.cit.:82] explains this concept better:

“The living-dead are therefore the closest link between men and God: they know the needs of men, they have ‘recently’ been here with men, and at the same time they have full access to the channels of communication with God directly or according to some societies, indirectly.”

There is a slight difference between a sacrifice made by the king and the one made by ordinary citizens. Since the sacrifice of the king is made on behalf of the entire nation, the

whole beast has to be offered to the ancestors. However, citizens dedicate only *inanzi* (third stomach of a beast or duodenum) as special offering of the ancestors. This portion is hung up, on top of *ithala* above the little beer that is usually placed at the back of the house which is also regarded as a sacred place. *Ithala* is an elevated place which looks like a raised platform at the back of a traditional hut.

The following discussion attempts to find out what the proverbs say with regard to the serving and sharing or eating of the sacrificial meat amongst the ordinary citizens.

## 6.6 Meat distribution

When all people are seated in their respective huts, the serving of meat and beer begins. Guests are served with both roasted and boiled meat. Stacks of meat are laid in large wooden-carved containers called *izingqoko* (trenchers) and then conveyed to each group in these trenchers. Nyembezi [op.cit.:208] states: “*Yinyama eyathiwa ngezitho zayo, isitho esithile siqondane nabathile.*” (It is the meat which is distributed according to its parts, a certain part corresponds with certain people) If sacrificial meat is distributed according to a certain procedure, as the statement indicates, an open question arises: who eats what and why?

The following proverbs give us a clue: *inhloko idlelwa ebandla* (a head of beast is eaten at the assembly of men) and *kwehlukana inhloko nesixhanti*. (it is the division of the head from the row of upper dorsal vertebrae) The first proverb gives us a place where *inhloko* is eaten. The second one explains that *inhloko* has to be separated from the *isixhanti*. Msimang (1975:133) gives us a reason for the separation of these two parts: “*Amadoda abenikwa isixhanti...Inhloko iyisitho sezinsizwa.*” (Senior men used to be given the upper dorsal vertebrae... The head of the beast is a portion for young men). The third proverb, which says: *akubandla lingayikudla mkhono*. (it is not the assembly of men if it does not eat the foreleg)



It is necessary to explain these words: *ibandla*, *inhloko* and *isixhanti* from the Zulu point of view prior to the tackling of their implication in the above mentioned proverbs.

#### 6.6.1 *Ibandla* (an assembly of men)

*Indoda* means a married man and *insizwa* generally refers to a young man who is not yet married. However, this does not mean that the time a young man gets married, he simultaneously becomes an old man. There are roughly two groups of young men. There are young men who through their marriage status become members of *ibandla* (an assembly of men) and those who are fully matured but not yet married. The latter group in Zulu is generally nicknamed as ‘big boys’ because they stand in between the two categories of manhood and boyhood. Young and old bachelors fall into this category. Strictly speaking, *ibandla* consists of both senior and young married men.

#### 6.6.2 *Inhloko* and *isixhanti*

Every adult beast has *isixhanti*. With bulls and oxen, it is prominent because they have more muscles. Where is this *isixhanti*? To illustrate a clear picture with regard to the position of *isixhanti*, it is better to start with *ilunda* which is a hump or a lump of meat that grows where both shoulders meet at the back of the neck. On a fully-grown up bull, it looks like a little hill overlooking the head. When a person looks at the front part of the body, starting from the *inhloko*, and moving towards the back of the body, *isixhanti* forms a link or a ‘bridge’ between the body and the *inhloko*. *Isixhanti* includes this row of upper dorsal vertebrae about the hump, areas around the neck and the meat around the shoulders. When *isixhanti* is cut off from the *inhloko*, it looks like a stump of a big tree. This is the meat that is assigned to senior men, which Krige [op.cit.:57] describes as the most delicate.

The following discussion sets out to explore the symbolism of eating both *isixhanti* and

*inhloko* consecutively.

### 6.6.3 *Isixhanti* and the mission of the family-heads

The association of men with meat on the top parts of the sacrificed beast reminds us that the Zulu follow a patriarchal social system whose leadership is in the family father, who is the head of the family and whose genes are a vital contribution to the gene pool of the next generation and maintenance of the lineage. According to Bryant [op.cit.:412) it is the father who also links his family to a group of other patresfamilias to form a clan. Men are at the apex of the social pyramid as heads and the active core in the administration of their families and a society as a whole.

In the folktale “Eyezinyamazane” (Canonici, 1993:10) it is said that when the animals had killed *iNkayimeva*, their enemy, they held a ceremony of thanksgiving in the kraal to celebrate their victory. During this ceremony, their king sent an interdiction informing the animals that they could eat everything, except the top branch.

A top position is at stake in this context if we consider that in the folktale, the king of the animals as the top authority eats the top branch and *isixhanti* being the ‘top meat’ is customarily eaten by senior men who are also heads of families as well as clans.

*Isixhanti* is very strong because it is made up of tough muscles. These muscles are made thus to sustain and hold the head high and also join the head to the whole body. *Isixhanti* serves as the beast’s energy provider.

It seems as if senior men eat it with the hope of attaining the power for the administration of their families and society, which their forefathers left in their hands. In my opinion, the positioning of *isixhanti* around the shoulders of the beast signifies the responsibility, which is vested on the shoulders of the family heads. When senior men eat *isixhanti*, they

symbolically accept the responsibility and mission to cater for their families, their household and other members of society from all different aspects of life.

The reason for the distribution of meat in groups comes in here. The Zulu believe that the ancestors who are invited to the ceremony of thanksgiving in a mythical way join other senior men who are still living in the eating of *isixhanti*. They together thank God on behalf of the host for the blessings He has given him. In essence, the community is not only invited to enjoy meat, it is also required to recommend the host to God by sending various intercessions to Him on his behalf.

On such an occasion, it is also believed that the departed seniors get an opportunity to check on the living senior men with regard to the maintenance of families and society. The living seniors have to ask for the strength to continue with the responsibility of protecting and caring for all the members of society. The late senior men eventually relay to God the request of their descendants.

#### 6.6.4 The *inhloko* and the future leaders

A head has several cultural connotations in Zulu. When young men fight with sticks or play stick-games, they also take great caution not to be struck on the head because knocking one's enemy on the head means victory on the side of an opponent. When a person is intelligent people refer to such a person as one with a head. It is also said that a person has a head when that person usually comes across some fortune unexpectedly.

The proverb tells us that *inhloko* is eaten by *ibandla*. The informants pointed out that the section of *ibandla* that eats the *inhloko* is that of young men. There is something to consider here with regard to the eating of *inhloko* by young men. In chapter two, it was mentioned that a boy who kills a bird has to eat its *inhloko* to be wise and able to kill another bird during the

next hunt.

What is it about the *inhloko* of the beast? There are many things that a person can talk about with regard to *inhloko* but for the following discussion a focus will be on the symbolism of the eyes, ears and the brain on the *inhloko* in relation to the development and survival of society by *izinsizwa* (young men).

### 6.7 *Izinsizwa* with a vision

Let us note that *izinsizwa* are not boys. They are fully matured males who are already involved in the administrative affairs of society. For the elderly these young are their hope for the survival of the society because they come into the administration with 'young' blood to take the society a further step into the future. This is the group that the elderly members of society look up to for the development, welfare and survival of its society when the elderly community is gone.

The aged members of society might have a picture of the future of their society if young men show signs of manhood while they are still young. A proverb says: *ubudoda abukhulelwa*, which means that wisdom does not always go by age.

Here is a picture that the proverb attempts to illustrate to us with regard to the parts of the sacrificed beasts that are eaten by *izinsizwa*: When a beast moves, its *inhloko* always faces the front with its eyes seeing things farther away. In this context the front represents the future of society and the *inhloko* represents young men. The body signifies society.

On the *inhloko* there are eyes which are considered as the light of the body. With their young and sharp eyes young men are therefore expected to be the eyes of society by noticing anything that might harm their society. They should also be alert and prepared for the

challenges which come with the future. This means that in preparation for their future mission young men should use their ears in listening and taking heed of advice and admonitions given to them by experienced members of both sexes because experience is the best teacher.

Inside *inhloko* there is the brain which is a centre of sensation, thought, intelligence and wisdom, which are the most valuable gifts of life. With their young brains, young men should therefore, propose new life skills and new ideas that will develop society.

#### 6.7.1 **Protectors of society**

Bryant [op.cit.: 691] observed:

“The small boys were very fond of making ‘mud-bulls’, and enjoyed a ‘bull-fight’... Each boy, brought his bull head-on against that of the adversary, and by a deft twist endeavoured to break off the horns of the other.”

This statement alludes to the fact that *inhloko* is not only a centre of thought but it is also a weapon to wage war against an enemy or an opponent during a fight as cattle fight with their heads. During a fight the skull, which is the biggest and the strongest bone on the head, protects the brain, which is the most delicate part of the body. From a Zulu perspective, the delicacy of the brain is likened to the life of society. Like powerful bulls that protect their herds, young men should also protect their society from its enemies from all aspects of life in order to create a secure and healthy environment that can create peace of mind. Peace makes plenty.

#### 6.7.2 **Perseverance**

The informants mentioned that *inhloko* has hard pricking bones which usually inflict pain on the gums when a person eats them. This is one of the reasons for not giving *inhloko* to senior men whose teeth are either loose or half- broken. The substances that young men eat are

symbols that work like road-signs for the traveler. By assigning this portion of meat to the young, the society indirectly tells them that the aspect of pricking is part and parcel of life. In life there are thorny issues, challenges and trials that come one's way unexpectedly. As young men persevere and endure the pain inflicted by the pricking bones of *inhloko*, they should in the same way persevere in all kinds of tribulations, which will come in their journey towards their future mission because perseverance is the mother of success. The image of crushing and cracking of the hard bones of the *inhloko* by the young can be compared to the cracking of stones which might block their way towards their mission of protecting their society with their youthful and vigorous strength.

#### 6.8 Meat for senior married women

The idiom: *libafazi bedube inyama* (it is like women who are furious about their meat) is commonly used in the description of overcast or cloudy weather because when women are angry for their meat they become fierce and unapproachable like the weather that is about to thunder. Unfortunately, the idiom does not precisely tell us the kind of meat that women ignore and the reason for ignoring it.

The informants said that there are usually two reasons that make women's temper run high with regard to the serving of meat during a celebration. Women become angry with the host if their meat is not of good quality or part of it has been cut. The informants also mentioned that during traditional times, when the rule was still strict, the host had only one solution to pacify the furious women. He had to slaughter another beast. Failing that, all senior women would leave the celebration. To avoid embarrassment the host would definitely slaughter another beast.

Since the proverb does not specify the parts of meat which senior married women eat, the informants gave a long list of the possible parts, which senior married women usually eat.

Some of them are: *umlenze* (hind-leg), *isifuba* (breast) *ungiklane* (chest-bone), *itwani* (tripe) *umhlubulo* (flank), *isinge* (the rump), etc. However, only two of these parts which are *imilenze* (hind-legs) and *isifuba* (breast) will be discussed in details in the coming discussion.

#### 6.8.1 The prestigious position of the breast

The breast of the beast is better protected than a human breast. It is positioned on a very safe place within the 'walls' of the forelegs. Both *inhloko* and *isixhanti* above it serve as its balcony to protect it from injuries, extreme sun-rays and rain. In turn the breast protects the most vital parts of the body which are the heart, lungs, liver, etc.

Due to the protection, warmth and care that the breast offers to the most delicate parts of the body, the Zulu compare it to the breast of a woman. A woman's breast seems to be the source of all nurturing qualities a person will think of. For example, women nurture their babies with milk generated from their own breasts. When a baby cries the mother comforts it and lets it lie on her breast near her warm and loving heart, where it usually ends up sleeping. An English proverb explains a mother's love better: a mother's love is best of all. This love is generated out of her heart, which is kept safe beneath the secure environment of the breast.

“A person does not simply eat in order to survive, but he eats in order to become strong in the sphere that matters, in the control of enemy forces which beset human life at every turn. This means magic power. This power is drawn from the substance consumed, so that a person becomes what he or she eats.”  
(Canonici quoted in Biyela, 1998:58)

This statement indicates that it is not a matter of eating food for the physical needs only. It is thus assumed that when senior married women are given the breast to eat, they are indirectly given a mission to accomplish. This means that their eating of the breast of the sacrificed beast should help them acquire that magical strength of loving and caring infinitely and tirelessly.

### 6.8.2 The hind-legs representing moral support

I asked the informants why senior married women have to eat the hind-legs. They mentioned that according to Zulu thought there are certain aspects that associate senior women with the hind-legs of a beast. Traditionally, women give birth kneeling on a floor with their thighs set apart in preparation for the coming of the baby. In this position a woman presses her legs strongly on the floor to acquire a good balance while pushing out to deliver her baby. In rural areas, this type of delivery is still practised. But in modern hospitals, women no longer kneel on the floor. However, it is said that healthy and strong legs are still a prerequisite for sustaining a woman during a process of delivery as this process often takes a long time to pass.

Despite the superiority of modern technology it is said that it is the legs that support a woman most in her struggle of bringing her infant into the world. The 'push-outs' that the midwives usually call for from a woman in labour are made successfully if the legs are well-balanced and in the position which will not allow them to come together to squeeze the baby to death.

What is the thought behind the eating of the hind-legs by senior women? A healthy beast has four legs that work in co-ordination. This means that a beast without the hind-legs is physically deformed. The importance of the hind-legs is specifically noticed when the beast is in motion especially during a fight. When the beast fights it engages its enemy with its head but all the balance comes from the hind-legs so that it does not fall on its back. To avoid falling, the beast makes sure that the hind-legs are well-balanced on the ground.

From a Zulu point of view the hind-legs are like the foundation poles on which the entire building stands. Without a good foundation any house can collapse. Amongst human beings these foundation poles seem to represent women. Like the hind-legs of a beast women make a home a well-balanced environment because with their love, caring, protection and compassion



they nurture us physically, mentally and psychologically.

Every one needs this kind of support because it gives a good balance in one's social relationship. This means that without the moral support of women our society would be like a beast without the hind-legs or a house without a good foundation.

The image of a beast without the hind-legs indicates to us how life could be in a single-gendered society. Men and women need each other for the success of their life endeavours. The Zulu proverb explains this concept better when it says: *izandla ziyagezana* (one hand washes the other) This means that everyone of us needs someone else's help. Navarro in Carnegie (1993:184): states:

“If you want to throw the javelin, it is not enough to have the strongest arm. You need the whole body to be strong... A good executive who makes great decisions and makes money ... but does not get along with his wife, is missing a crucial part of life.”

## **Conclusion**

Zulu society like every society depends upon its young generation for its survival. Accordingly, Zulu society safeguards its youth by confining it to those actions the society thinks necessary for its welfare. It also sees to it that experienced members of society assist the youth to reach their full potential. Manci states [op.cit.:16]

“For an African therefore, it was never thought that an adult could mislead a young person. The training of the young was never considered a private affair. Any elder was expected to correct and teach the young. For this reason every adult was to be respected as one's mother or father and every child was regarded as an adult's child.”

According to Zulu traditional ethics every adult was responsible for the establishment and

maintenance of order as well as the provision of orientation to the young.

Proverbs emanating from bird- hunting and *ukwelusa* (herding) experiences exert irreversible authority as a means to curb young individuals from deviating from established norms and values that contribute to the survival of society. As a result, these proverbs take the form of decrees, tenets and statutes or principles. They in a sense permit or require or prohibit the performance of acts which means that they are prescriptive in nature and they also appear as commands as well as orders in a form of rules.

Ong (1982:35) states:

“The law itself in oral cultures is enshrined in formulaic sayings, proverbs, which are not mere jurisprudential decorations, but themselves constitute the law.”

The primary objective of sharing a sacrificed beast is to keep the members of society united, co-operative and striving towards a communal goal despite their gender, status, socio-political and economic differences. Evans-Pritchard (1965:62) better explains the importance of solidarity amongst the members of society who strive towards a communal goal through co-responsibility:

“ For a society to become conscious of itself and to maintain its sentiments at the necessary degree of intensity, it must periodically assemble and concentrate itself.”

## Chapter 7

### ASPECTS OF RESPONSIBLE BEHAVIOUR

#### Introduction

The most basic moral value underlying development of society that this chapter seeks to explore is that of responsible behaviour amongst members of society. By making a claim for fundamental moral values stemming from an ethical behaviour, a foundation is established which can be used to develop rational arguments about actions or issues of concern. A focus upon values is justified through its contributions to a just society, the preservation and growth of co-operation and harmony within and between social and cultural groups. All human relationships are required to be considerate in social contexts where for example, the behaviour of an individual can affect the quality of the behaviour of others.

Ethical behaviour embodies the ideals we should strive for and how we should behave. Standards for ethical conduct vary depending on the social and political context of each society. However, there are certain basic principles of ethical behaviour that are required in any society so that any persons in a position of responsibility, whether they are in government, business and community or civil society have a duty to act with integrity, and promote social relations and justice.

The intention is to contribute to an understanding of the rational basis for examining moral questions and the resolution of conflict between individual's needs and desires on the one hand and the responsibilities to others and to the environment on the other. It involves the development of self-knowledge and understanding of the feeling, experiences, needs, purposes and rights of oneself and others.

In this chapter there are four specific aspects that call for responsible behaviour and

commitment that will be dealt with from a Zulu perspective. These include *ukweshela* (courtship) and its struggles, experiences or challenges of a newly-married bride, a mother, a versatile figure in the family and parental responsibilities

### 7.1 *Ukweshela* (Courtship)

*Ukweshela* is another form of establishing a romantic relationship that generally takes place over a long period of time as it develops from casual dating to a stage where two people agree to commit themselves in marriage. This discussion seeks to examine the context in which romantic relationships occur, the effects of society on the establishment of these relationships. It also discusses the nature of intimacy, the values of romantic relationship, the factors involved in establishing these relationships, and the struggles young partners go through in building a romantic relationship.

The discussion further looks at things that threaten the establishment of romantic relationships and how young partners cope with those threats. Jealousy, anxiety to obtain a romantic partner, uncertainty about the course of events, and rivalry amongst suitors usually put strain on the establishment of a romantic relationship. A suitor who eventually wins the young woman over his heart and marries her becomes a victor.

#### 7.1.1 Patterns of courtship

“Courting knows nor race nor age. It is instinctive in mankind, and as old. Why even the animals and birds indulge and are adept at it.” (Bryant, 1949:562)

*Ukweshela* (courtship), like other social phenomena differs across generations as well as societies in many ways. Patterns of *ukweshela* also differ in respect of who initiates it, rules, methods of communication and length of time it takes. There are also devices and social programmes which every nation implements to regulate and evaluate the processes of courtship to preserve the nation’s identity as well as its cultural strategy.

Amongst Nguni clans for example, it is males that are expected to initiate the wooing process. According to Zulu custom courtship is supposed to take two years and longer because it is believed that marriage is less likely to succeed if there is a very short period of courtship.

A potential couple needs a longer time together to discover possible incompatibilities prior to their commitment to each other. Although both partners might be seeking some kind of immediate physical satisfaction, at the same time they are both looking for someone with qualities of trust, loving and caring. Little (1982:24) states:

“Both men and women want partners who will first of all be loving mates and, second, caring parents. They feel bitterly disappointed about their partner’s failure to meet these personal needs.”

#### 7.1.2 *Ukubuthwa* (Regimentation)

There are many social changes that have taken place in Zulu society. It is appropriate to mention that the system of ordering young people to engage themselves in matters of the heart that will be examined in the following discussion is no longer practised in the same way as it was during traditional times, which is relatively the time before the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

During formative years of those days, the youth of both sexes were grouped into regiments. Each regiment had a leader or leaders who administered the love life of the amateurs under his or her charge. Leaders were chosen amongst the experienced seniors who had already chosen their romantic partners to monitor the juniors in their romantic relationship. The censorship of sexual intercourse prior to marriage awarded young people with outstanding integrity in society.

The division of young people of both sexes into regiments is a form of social programme used in preparation of young people prior to courtship experiences. This programme is regarded

amongst Zulu society as one of major aspects in the regulation of youngsters in the field of courtship.

### 7.1.3 Division of young females

Among the Nguni clans girls are divided into three distinct groups, which are: *amatshitshi*, *amaqhikiza* and *izintombi*.

According to Biyela, (1998:21) *amatshitshi* are teenage girls who are not yet fully developed while *amaqhikiza* form a group of senior girls with romantic partners, and who also act as mentors for younger girls who are starting the affairs of the heart. Simply speaking, *izintombi* is a collective term referring to both *amaqhikiza* and fully developed girls entering the courtship arena.

### 7.1.4 Ukujutshwa (To be given orders)

Basically, *ukujutshwa* was an orientation programme, which was meant to give a direction to young girls who were entering the adolescence stage with regard to morality as well as matters concerning their choice of romantic partners.

Nyembezi & Nxumalo (1966:110) state:

*“Injongo yalokhu kujutshwa kwakungukwazisa izintombi ukuthi sezingaqoma. Lokhu kusho ukuthi kayikho intombi eyayithanda umuntu ingajutshwanga, futhi ingatshenanga muntu.”* (The aim for giving this order was a way of informing the girls that they could begin to have romantic partners. This means that no girl was allowed to fall in love before she had been given permission to do so. A girl was not allowed to have a lover without telling anyone)

Nyembezi & Nxumalo [ibid] further explain:

*“Bekuthi lapho esejutshiwe amantombazana kuphele isikhashana bese*

*kuhlangana umhlangano okwakuthiwa yintandi. Lapha amantombazana ayebuzwa ukuthi asekhombile yini, uma emaningi angakakhombi elulekwe. ukuba aphumuze abantababantu izesheli.*” (A short time would pass after the girls had been given permission. After that a meeting called *intandi* would be called where the young girls would be asked if they had fallen in love. If not, they would be advised to let go)

According to Krige (1967:105) a girl may neither accept nor reject anyone before she has been given permission to do so at the *intandi*. First impressions are not always accurate or reliable. When we perceive someone to be physically attractive and to hold high social status, we tend to make a snap judgement, and we are also likely to attribute a host of other positive qualities to that individual, forgetting that physical attractiveness is not the only criterion for selecting a life partner.

Probably, the period between *ukujutshwar* of the girls and the convention, which was called *intandi*, was meant to give the girls enough time to sort out matters concerning the selection of their future companions. Kevles (1986:11) observed the social behaviour of female birds during courting season:

“ Females in many species do not accept the first available male. But their failure to do so does not necessarily stem from abhorrence of sexual involvement. Rather, these females may be trying out different suitors and possible playing for time.”

This period can also be seen as a trial phase prior to their selection of their partners. They had to enter the world of love affairs with a profound decision from a mature mind because:

“To accept or *qoma* a lover is a serious matter in Zulu society and is tantamount to engagement, for a girl may not *qoma* twice.” Krige [op.cit.:105]

This means that an individual has to engage in courtship with an aim of eventually finding someone to marry.

### 7.1.5 Division of young males

*Izintombi* have their equivalents on the male side as the latter are also divided into age-groups when entering adolescent stage. Young males are roughly divided into two groups, which are: *amabhungu* and *izinsizwa*. *Amabhungu*, like their female counterparts, are boys who are not yet engaged in love affairs. The second group of *izinsizwa* includes the fully developed young men who have just started dating as well as young men who already have romantic partners. Those who already have romantic partners also act as mentors for the boys who are still amateurs in romantic relationships.

The Nguni clans give a right of initiating an intimate relationship to males. However, this privilege does not mean that young males can engage in romantic relationships at any time they want, particularly during traditional times when Nguni laws concerning premarital relationships were very strict. Krige [op.cit:118] confirms:

“Nowadays, young Zulu men can get married any time they like after puberty, but in the olden days this could not be.”

This means that like their female peers, young males were also governed by strict moral rules of society. It shows that no matter how anxious an individual was to form a romantic relationship, she or he was not likely to go against the social norms that governed courtship.

The following discussion takes us to the basic aspect of romantic relationship which is companionship.

## 7.2 Singleness versus companionship

There is something that comes to my mind with regards to a pair. When we were children there were things that we used to sing or say when certain birds passed by us. For example, when a pair of doves crossed in front of us, the one who saw it first had to shout saying:



“Two for joy! Good luck for me!” The rest of the group would envy the one who saw these two birds first because it meant that some luck was coming to the one who saw the pair first because it is believed that a pair of doves is a sign of fortune. A pair of doves left us with a bright picture of hope and happiness.

On the contrary, when a single dove crossed in front of us nobody would own up to admit having seen it first because the whole group would confront her or him shouting: “One for sorry!” This meant that something bad was going to befall that particular individual. As a result, a single dove left us with a gloom image because it was like an orphan or a destitute.

Let us consider an image of a pair of doves from a courtship point of view. This image of a pair of doves is often used by young men when proposing love to girls. A young man would say to his suitor: *asibe njengamajuba*. (let us be like doves) In other words a young man attempts to form a pair that will make people rejoice as they do when they see a pair of doves. It is assumed that he wants to belong to a pair that represents joy and peace like a dove that Mtonga in Sienaert (1998:323) talks about:

“The Namaqua Dove is always portrayed as quiet, meek and well-behaved as opposed to other creatures that are noisy and quarrelsome.”

When people see a dove flying without its partner, they always think that there is no peace and safety where it comes from which could be the cause of the loss of its partner. For the onlookers a single dove represents sorrow. It appears that without a partner of the opposite sex a young man feels uncomfortable and incomplete because he has no one to share his romantic feelings with.

There is another pair of birds called of *ubucwibi* which is of interest amongst courting males in Zulu society.

### 7.2.1 Quest for intimacy

*Ubucwib' obuhle buhamba ngabubili*, (The good small grass-seed eating birds are those that go in pairs) is one of the proverbs used by Zulu young men when they propose love to girls. *Ubucwibi* are species of small grass-seed eating birds, which are usually found in crop-fields. This proverb tells us that these little birds are mostly admired for their going together.

According to the informants the pair of *ubucwibi* which consists of a male and a female represents an ideal intimate couple because most of the time the two birds are found together in finding food and shelter, and grooming each other with absolute care. It is also said that during brooding season the male protects and defends the territory from invading enemies that might interfere with mother-bird on the nest.

These are unique characteristics of *ubucwibi* as birds like eagles and owls for example, act differently because they are only seen together in a pair during the mating season.

The pairing of *ubucwibi* into a male and female reminds us of Genesis 7 verses 15 - 16 where God commanded Noah to collect and put into the ark a male and a female of each species of all that was alive. According to Mbiti (1990:91) African societies have different myths with regard to the creation of men. For African people the creation of men mainly reflect the picture of a husband and wife, male and female. For example, the Mende society in Sierra Leone believe that God first made all other things, and then created men, both husband and wife.

It can be argued that God could have commanded Noah to collect in a pair of every species of animal without specifying the gender of animals. It is presumed that the pairing of animals according to their gender was God's way of illustrating to Noah's mind the importance of the heterosexual combination. Why? It appears that God as the Creator is quite aware that neither

males nor females are self-sufficient. Sexual mates need each other as they complement each other. Each of the couple has to act as a buffer when difficulties come or to moderate the severity of the impact of negative events.

From a Zulu point of view, the two birds in companionship form an inspirational model for young people who are starting to build their romantic relationships. For young people this image of *ubucwibi* becomes a model to be imitated and followed. As a result, the *ubucwibi* image becomes a popular referent for young men when illustrating their possible future relationship to the girls they court. It seems that young men use the *ubucwibi* image as an inspirational drive to motivate them to build heterosexual relationships similar to the two birds.

However, the proverb indirectly leaves prospective couples with a great challenge. The underlying message of the proverb about *ubucwibi* in particular seems to highlight the point that genuine intimacy does not simply mean the involvement of heterosexual relationships only, but it is deeply concerned with a relationship that is based on mutual commitment. The above proverb emphasises the point that a healthy romantic relationship is the one that enhances one's well-being, satisfaction, and happiness through mutual trust, responsible behaviour, caring and love.

Building a romantic relationship requires time together; enough time for the partners to develop their relationship through the growth of trust and an increasing amount of self-disclosure and development of shared interests and attitudes. Therefore, each needs each other to express and to share life values together and to experience the fulfillment to love and to be loved. In other words sexual mates complement each other. These are unique experiences that young people find exciting and fulfilling.

Romantic relationships also enhance an individual's prestige. For young people in particular,

it creates an opportunity for them to show society that they are desirable individuals as well as young citizens who are able to handle their own affairs. It is also an ambitious adventure through which every young person frees himself or herself from emotional stress and loneliness. According to Lauer (1994:117) loneliness is a burden from which most people seek to free themselves. As social creatures we need each other to relate or share life with. Almost everyone of us has an inherent need to belong through involvement with one of a different sex in order to share mutual commitment, affection, love, caring, trust and companionship in a more meaningful way.

This could be the reason why the following proverbs dealing with romantic relationships reflect a strong sense of rivalry amongst young courting males because every young person quests for an intimate relationship even at the expense of the other person.

### 7.3 A girl: a bone of contention

*Isok' alidli kahl' imbang' ikhala.* (A lover does not eat well when the rival is crying) Such expression is often heard when there is rivalry amongst suitors over a girl who has chosen one of them as her lover. This expression gives us an allusion that a newly chosen lover is not supposed to sit on his laurels with the hope that the rival is over because the girl who was the source of contention is on his side. According to the expression the lover concerned has to know that his rivals are not congratulating him for having victory over them. They can still fight back. Rivalry on romantic relationships often causes a great impact amongst young people.

The proverb says: *oseyishayil'akakayosi noseyosil'akakayidli noseyidlil'udl' icala* (One who has hit it has not yet roasted it, one who has already roasted it has not yet eaten it, and the one who has eaten it has put a charge against himself). Since this proverb originates from the bird-hunting scenario, it is necessary to provide brief background information with regard to the

hunting of birds by boys before tackling the figurative analysis of the proverb.

Usually boys hunt birds in groups which allows several boys to chase one bird at a time. Each boy throws either his stick or a stone at the bird with an aim of striking first because knocking the bird first during the hunt is a great honour for a youngster because it shows that he is a skilful hunter. The boy that kills the bird claims it as his own property and takes it home to his grandparents with pride. It has been already mentioned that the boy shares his bird with other children in the family. But this does not deprive him of being the owner of the bird. The bird could not have come home on its own. Even those who share the bird with him should know that the victor is the one who managed to kill the bird, brought it home and roasted it after he had shown it to his grandparent.

The above proverb also talks about the hitting of the bird, roasting and eating. It is important to associate the picture of hunting boys with a courtship arena. One girl may be courted by several young men at one period of time.

Correlation comes in here. Like boys throwing their sticks at the bird, several young men send their proposals of love to one heart in the same period of time, each young man anxious to win the girl over to himself first. Unfortunately, there is only one proposal that might go through into the girl's heart, which means that the girl might eventually fall in love with only one of her suitors. It is the girl's right to choose who her future romantic partner will be. Harris (1991:1) writing about female courtship strategies as a function of sexuality standards and perceptions of love and commitment states:

“The basic premise is that the female's beliefs about the acceptability of sexual relations with a dating partner is dependent upon her individual sexuality standards and the context of the relationship in which the behaviour occurs.”

Perper and Weis (1987) in Harris (1991:1) have also provided evidence that females exert active control over the courtship process through their use of perceptive signals and

rejection strategies. Looking at the above proverb from the courtship point of view, it is presumed that an individual whom the proverb refers to as one who hits, roasts and eats the bird represents a young man, while the bird represents a girl being courted. The first clause of the proverb refers to such a lucky suitor as *oseyishayile*. (one who struck/hit it) That one is a victor. The rest are repelled. It is a great disappointment to those who are rejected. However, it appears that they do not just give up and back off if the two following clauses are taken into consideration: *akakayosi* (he has not yet roasted it) and *akakayidli*. (he has not yet eaten it) From the literal point of view, the subjects of both *akakayosi* and *akakayidli* is a hunter or a young man while the object is the bird, as a hunter obviously roasts and then eats his bird he has hunted.

The following discussion seeks to explore the figurative implication of *akakayosi* (he has not yet roasted it) and *akakayidli* (he has not yet eaten it) consecutively as well as the two referents namely, the hunter and the bird.

### 7.3.1 The impact of jealousy

Labriola (1995-2001) who specialises in the management of jealousy in open relationships points out:

“The biggest obstacle to creating successful and satisfying open relationships is jealousy... It is crucial to understand what jealousy is and what it is about. Jealousy is about fear-fear of the unknown and of change, fear of losing power or control in a relationship, fear of scarcity and loss, and fear of abandonment. It is a reflection of our own insecurity about our worthiness, anxiety about being adequate as a lover, and doubts about our desirability.”

Jealousy is the subconscious feeling of threat from the betterment of others. It is an element of corruption, being one of the manifestations of the basic cause of all corruption. The origin of jealousy begins as all vice does, with the assumption that prevailing against other persons would solve one's problems. Prevailing is threatening and it creates conflicts. Vulnerable

persons become victims.

Sexual selection takes two forms. It involves struggles among males for sexual access to females and on the other hand females also show that they are not passive reluctant recipients. They too want to be won over by the most popular suitors.

The second clause: *akakayosi* (he has not yet roasted it) alludes to the fact that there are certain on-lookers that are closely watching the victor, whom the girl has chosen as her lover. The suitors who were rejected by the girl keep a close watch on this newly built relationship to see if there is still any opportunity for them to snatch the girl away from the victor. It is assumed that jealousy drives them to fight back in order to win the girl over on their side. This shows that they do not want to give up easily.

This comment: *akakayosi* is a detrimental threat to the newly-built relationship because it indicates that rivals are on their way to snatch the girl away from her present lover since the relationship is not yet guaranteed by matrimonial law. This *akakayosi* might also be interpreted as saying: not yet engaged, which gives rivals a way to distract the girl until she changes her mind and rejects her present lover. In other words, it is still the survival of the fittest amongst the girl's suitors.

### 7.3.2 The engagement: the perils of courtship

It is not easy to determine the length of romantic relationship prior to a final commitment, which is marriage. This period fluctuates according to the interests of the couples concerned. However, the final phase of courtship is generally the engagement, which is the process whereby two people agree to commit themselves to marriage. The third clause of the proverb under examination says: *noseyosil'akakayidli* (the one who has already roasted it has not yet eaten it). It is this phase that the Zulu compare to a period of bird-roasting. It is imagined that

such a bird is most appetising. It must have been prepared with mouth-watering flavours for the gratification of its owner.

This image of a roasted bird has a number of interpretations. It may reflect the beauty of the prospective bride prior to her wedding day, the aspiration as well as dreams of the prospective husband about his future partner, and the excitement about their final commitment. This roasting may also imply that the intimate relationship is almost matured for the final commitment, which is marriage. Probably, both partners are anxious about the fulfillment of their dreams which is coming closer through marriage. Unfortunately, behind their backs, rivals are sneaking in as the third clause indicates: *noseyosil'akakayidli* (the one who has already roasted it has not yet eaten it). During such tense situations, we often hear the young males saying: *Zal'abantu. Ziy'ebantwini. Akukho ntombi yagan' inyamazane* (They jilt people. They go to other people. No girl marries a buck). This proverb shows that the courtship struggle continues with intensity.

Let us break the above proverb into two parts. The first part of the following discussion will focus on the impact of the verb *ala* (to jilt) on the sexual relationship of the couple. The second part will explore the implication of an *inyamazane* (a buck) within the context of courtship.

### 7.3.3 The impact of the verb *ala*

*Zala* comes from the basic verb *ala*. (to jilt) The rivals use this verb as a threatening signal or a forceful element to pressurise the girl to change her mind about her present lover. A rival makes sure that the girl hears this word constantly. The objective is to distract the girl's mind. Through this word she is made to pay attention to the pleas of the up-coming suitors. Krige [op. cit.:117] observed that if verbal threats fail, other means might be used by rivals to pressurise the girl:



“ Medicines can be used by a man to make himself attractive to the girls, but most of them are administered to girls to cause them love him.”

I was amazed to hear that one of the love charms which young people use during courting is made from the fat of the hippopotamus. This animal does not look that attractive! But the informants emphasized that its fat is one of the best love-charms used in society. Whether the love-charms work as the informants claimed, is not important in this context. Our focus is on the means young men use to make girls love them so that they can become victors in the courtship arena.

#### 7.3.4 The concept of *inyamazane* (buck)

“*Inyamazane yisilwane sasendle esidliwayo.*” (A buck is a wild edible animal) (Nkabinde, 1985:158) The competition to court is keen and the rivalry also continues. A rival tells the girl that she is not supposed to marry the buck. Instead, she has to marry a human being, probably himself, as he sees himself superior to a buck because he can kill it whenever he wants. Such an attitude implies that humans consider a buck as an inferior, vulnerable and powerless creature, which is not worthy to marry a human girl. What is the implication of *inyamazane* in this context? Our point of departure is the vulnerability of a buck in the hands of human beings. Bucks are victims of humans.

Thus, an image of a vulnerable buck symbolises a lack of security and protection, whereas a healthy relationship is that which is fortified with a protecting hand within a safe environment. The rival seems to sympathise with the girl. From a rival’s point of view, her fiancé cannot offer her the love, caring security and protection she needs. The rival thus sees no one else, including the girl’s fiancé, who can offer her such a secured love except himself. Rapoport (1980:32) states: “ Girls are generally more concerned with search for acceptance and security.” Morgan (1973:57) also maintains: “Women need to be loved.”

The up-coming rival tries by all means to draw the girl’s attention towards himself as he

claims to offer her the kind of love she needs. In other words, the rival seems to maintain that if the girl jilts her fiancé and accepts him, she will not lose anything. Instead she will get the best she needs in a romantic relationship.

In such circumstances, it appears that it is the female who has to exercise control over which male she chooses as her future husband.

### 7.3.5 The concept of 'the charge'

Eventually, one of the rivals eats his well-roasted bird. The girl he has been courting has given him her heart. He has to be congratulated on his achievement. On the contrary, a charge is laid against him as the following proverb indicates: *oseyidli' udl' icala*. (one who has eaten it has put a charge against himself) Why a charge and what does this charge imply in this context?

In any form of a relationship problems may arise from a great number of things. There is no relationship without conflict or hardship. These are always inevitable. But why does the proverb put more responsibility on the husband, that is the one who has eaten the 'bird'?

What the proverb seems to emphasize is the fact that if problems and hardships arise, it is vital that a husband takes an initiative to establish a mutual system of relating to each other and way of dealing with their emotional states when problems come. It appears as if the proverb says that since he is the one who initiated a process of courtship, he still has a responsibility to develop a relationship to a joint venture in fulfilling their goals as a means of staying together in mutual commitment. Lauer [op.cit.:249] states:

“Commitment facilitates satisfaction and stability, and in turn, satisfaction and stability breed commitment. Commitment is a living part of marriage.”

He is also called to be fully committed to his wife against all odds. For example, his wife may be infertile. He is not supposed to make her feel guilty and depressed for being incapable of giving birth to a child of her own womb. He will be held responsible for any kind of grief that his wife might suffer through him.

All in all, the last clause of the proverb that talks about the bird and its owner highlights the point that marriage is not only a matter of living together of heterosexual partners through matrimonial law but it involves a huge responsibility for the victor that is, the husband. According to the proverb an irresponsible husband deserves a heavy fine from society.

Normally, married women are not courted. W.W. Mabuya, one of the informants, maintains that being a victor in the courtship arena does not necessarily guarantee the end of the rivalry. In his opinion the charge that the proverb refers to is a form of a reminder. It reminds the newly-married husband of the struggle he passed through in finding his wife. He is also reminded that the woman he is married to was won out of a multitude of other suitors who might have had a better standing than him in the girl's heart. If the husband fails to fulfil his obligation towards the 'bird' he has eaten, he is accountable to face negative consequences either emotionally or physically. He might even lose his 'bird'.

#### **7.4 The newly-married woman and her challenges**

Marriage rites demonstrate the accession to a new status. It is usually through marriage that young partners acquire their position as adults in society and their right to the responsibilities, which they share as husband and wife.

Nsamenang (1992:85) writing about human development in a cultural context and from a Third World Perspective states: "Full adult status, thus requires that a person be married with children." Mbiti [op.cit.:137] maintains that in the Batoro people of Uganda if an unmarried person dies, his or her body is beaten up with a thorny bush to show that as an unmarried

person she or he deserves and receives no respect in the eyes of society.

However, marriage may still come with new challenges and responsibilities especially for the newly-married bride. This is why the following discussion looks at problems that befall a woman without a child in marriage and is also concerned about the environment within which children grow. Our point of departure for the examination of the social responsibilities of a newly-married women from a Zulu perspective is based on the interpretation of the metaphor of a mouse, which is used in a marriage context.

When things are not going smoothly for a young married woman people usually comment using the following proverb: *umendo kawuthunyelwa gundane* (a mouse is not sent to a place where one will marry). According to the commentators the misfortunes that befall the young woman in her marriage are caused by the fact she was not able to send a mouse to the place of her marriage prior to her marriage. In their opinion the mouse would have come back with certain 'tips' for the survival of her marriage. It could have told her what her in-laws expect of her when she is married. It could have also told her not to marry into the family with challenges beyond her reach.

This is what is often heard when a young woman is prosperous in her marriage, that is, having children, economically balanced, and having a good relationship with her husband as well as her in-laws: *usibanibani* (so and so) *wawuthumela igundane*, meaning that she first sent a mouse to her in-laws to ask them on her behalf what she has to prepare before she comes to live with them. It means that she entered marriage with all the necessary information she needed for her married life. What does the mouse represent in the above proverbs? In the forthcoming discussions our concern will be on the interpretation of an image and its association with the marriage context.

The physical traits of the mouse will be examined as background information for a better

understanding of a metaphor under discussion.

#### 7.4.1 The Division of the proverb:

- *umendo kawuthunyelwa gundane*

(Umendo) *wawuthumel' igundane* is an idiom which is derived from the above proverb. It is important to note that both the proverbs *umendo kawuthunyelwa gundane* and the idiom (*umendo*) *wawuthumel' igundane* are made up of three elements which are closely related and dependent on each other for the transmission of the message conveyed in a metaphoric form. These elements are the mouse, which is also regarded as a messenger, *umendo* (marriage) and the verb, *thunyelwa* (to be sent for). In this division the messenger mouse is our starting point while *umendo* (marriage) is our destination. However, to reach this destination we first need to consider the importance of the word *thunyelwa*, (to be sent for), a passive form of the verb *thuma* (to send) which joins the two pillars of our discussion. From the verb *thuma* (to send) also comes out the noun *isithunywa* (a messenger).

In this discussion the mouse, as a messenger plays the most important role because the success of the message conveyed, solely depends upon its character, qualities and attitude.

#### 7.5 The species of rats and mice

According to Chris and Tilde Stuart (1988:100) there are 57 species of rats and mice, belonging to two families, the Cricetidae and Muridae, recorded in Southern Africa. These two large families include the species of striped mouse, house mouse and dormice. The latter is further sub-divided into four species of spectacled, rock, woodland and Lesser Savanna dormouse.

Unfortunately, the two versions of the metaphors about a mouse as a messenger do not specify the species of a mouse that could be a possible candidate for this purpose. To avoid examining each and every species of the Cricetidae and Muridae families, in search of a possible messenger, I intend to limit my search to a few species which include the striped mouse and house mouse, as they are closely associated with human dwellings and they are also characterised by giving birth to many pups, features which a number of informants came up with during interviews. Chris and Tilde Stuart [op.cit:110-112] also observed that one striped mouse gives birth to 5- 6 to young after a gestation period of about 25 days usually in summer. These mice also live in pairs or family parties. The house mouse is said to breed throughout the year, giving birth to 1-13 times usually 6 young per litter after a gestation of about 19 days

## 7.6 The possible messengers to *umendo* (marriage)

### 7.6.1 The *imbiba*

Almost every one has seen a mouse crossing a path or a road in a rush. Very often, we do not reflect about its rush and its destination. People like Zizwezonke Mthethwa have made an effort to observe this running. However, his observation only concerns the behaviour of *imbiba*. According to Zizwezonke *imbiba* does not simply run across the path, but it gets into it and goes along it, in front of the traveler for a while, before it disappears into thick grass. Zizwezonke Mthethwa also explained that this habit of *imbiba* is interpreted by the Zulu as a sign of good luck. Msimang (1975:165)) maintains that *imbiba* is one of the species of the mice that predict luck.

The *imbiba* has white stripes on its back. According to Zulu, these stripes are a symbol of good luck. In Zulu white colour represents all goodness, particularly purity, love, fortune and prosperity. Therefore, the appearance of this mouse during someone's journey means that *izinhlanhla* (fortune or blessings) accompany that particular person.

It is presumed that this theory of fortune automatically secures these species of mice against any dangers, particularly amongst the Zulu community. Nobody would dare molest a fortune-teller on its way to break the good news, either of fortune or prosperity.

It is assumed that it is also the white stripes that make *imbiba* a symbol of fortune and prosperity and the most favourable candidate as a messenger to *umendo*. It is imagined that when *imbiba* arrives at one's home, the resident will welcome it warmly thinking that it is bringing something good. Unfortunately, the theory of fortune which is attached to this mouse does not guarantee its selection as a messenger. This makes one abandon the species search to look for a mouse gender, apparently irrespective as to species.

According to the informants, a female mouse would apparently make the best candidate as a messenger in a marriage context. Therefore, a survey still goes on in search for the most possible candidate.

#### **7.6.2 The female mouse as a possible messenger**

Although the proverb does not specify the gender of a mouse that has to be sent to *umendo*, a number of informants supported the idea of a female mouse. One of the reasons for their nomination of the female mouse as the best candidate derived from the fact that females in general easily adapt to new environments because they are sociable, cunning and have a strong sense of purpose. The informants also mentioned the point that females do not usually fight over territorial dominance as males usually do. The habit of fighting over boundary dominance amongst males limits their freedom of movement. About the movements of the mice Lidicker (1976) in Brain (1989:36) writes: "Females may move between territories more readily than males." Both Lidicker and Brain are researchers in the School of Biological Science who specialise in the study of behavioural Sciences to Animal Welfare, Conservation and Ecology. Twig (1975:53) also maintains: "The females appear more purposeful, scurrying back and forth with suitable material."

This freedom of movements amongst females gives them a better chance to be included in a short list of those to be recruited as messengers.

The testimony of the following informants will form a point of our departure for the identification of certain aspects of life that the social behaviour of a mouse in general reflects that prompt Zulu society to use it as a referent particularly in a marriage context.

Zizwezonke Mthethwa on 17.4.99:

Wherever a mouse lives, it survives. The mouse breeds and finds a home for its family. It never rests until it has enough food for its pups. It is very diligent. If a girl could be given an opportunity to send a mouse to her in-laws before she marries she might ask the mouse 'to bless' her with a gift of prosperity and fortune because a mouse is regarded as a symbol of fortune and prosperity. For example, when the *imbiba* crosses a path in front of you, the Zulu explain that as a sign of fortune.

Mpumelelo Mbatha on 23.6.99:

The mouse is swift and active. Therefore, it can be a good messenger. Although it is not by nature a domestic animal, it manages to sneak into our houses. The mouse works like a secret agent because it can secretly study our behaviour from its hidden hole. At night it runs all over the house as if in search of something. If it were a human being, it would be the best decoder of the secrets uttered behind closed doors.

Zenzele Myeza on 12.12.99:

The mouse is a unique animal. Due to its diligence and cunning, it has always enough food to feed its pups. This shows that it is a caring mother. Look, it has no house of its own amongst human residences, but it never goes hungry. The female mouse in particular collects all kinds of soft material to warm its nest to keep itself in a warm environment.

From the testimony of the informants it became clear for me that the majority of them



are in favour of a female mouse. They see a female mouse as the one that is characterised by adaptability, diligence, caring and productiveness. In their view it is also a symbol of fortune and prosperity. According to Zulu perception a mouse can make a wonderful bride if it can be given a chance to 'marry.' Why a mouse? In other words what positive characteristics as well as qualities of a mouse should a prospective bride look up to in order to have a successful marriage?

The following discussion attempts to identify the expectations that Zulu society has for a prospective bride. In other words the discussion will highlight the social values that might help the newly-married bride to maintain her marriage.

### **7.7 The white colour and its symbolism**

One of the referents that appeared to be the most favourite amongst the informants in connection with marriage was the *imbiba*, a mouse with the white stripes. It has been already mentioned that when someone comes across *imbiba*, some fortune or good news might befall that particular individual because the white stripes of this mouse are associated with fortune or any kind of goodness. The white colour has other associations in Zulu tradition. For example, when a girl falls in love for the first time she is supposed to give her lover *ucu*, (a string of beads) which has been made by herself. The colour of this string must be white. The white string is worn by the young man around his neck as a token of their first love.

#### **7.7.1 The uncontaminated**

Taking the white colour into a context of marriage another association can be identified. White is also associated with virginity because the uncontaminated hymen of a young girl is delicately white. It is also believed that the whiteness of the girl's private part is a reflection of her inner purity.

Thus, when the bride enters her marital stage with an uncontaminated body, her husband as well as her in-laws regard her as a person who comes to bring some goodness to their home because the most delicate part of her body is still crowned with a white colour. According to Zulu thought white colour expresses love, purity, peace, safety, prosperity and fortune. There seems to be a correlation between the Zulu and the Kaguru people of Tanzania with regard to the metaphors concerning bodily and sexual orientation. According to Kaguru white expresses safety, peace, and normality. (Beidelman, 1986:39)

#### **7.7.2 White, a symbol of reconciliation**

In Zulu society white is also associated with forgiveness. When there is a ritual of reconciliation in a family, a white bead is thrown into a dish with water. Towards the end of the ritual all the members of the family wash their hands in this dish that contains a white bead. A white bead in the washing dish signifies that reconciliation has been achieved.

#### **7.8 Adaptability**

The other characteristic of a mouse that the informants often mentioned is its ability to adapt itself even under most unfavourable conditions. One of the most important tasks facing a newly-married bride also is that of adaptability. Initially, things might be difficult for her due to the differences in personal interests and cultural backgrounds. An aspect of adaptability is essential in this context if we consider that Zulu society has extended families where siblings and grandparents live together in one big family. One imagines a very crowded environment. Like a mouse the newly-married bride has to strive to adapt herself to the new environment to which she is a stranger. However, she has to decide on the establishment of new patterns of behaviour and communication which may help her in familiarising herself with the new environment. She has to face challenges of new roles as a new member of the family as well as a wife to her husband. She has to learn the traditions of her new family.

Milk products are special foods because they belong to those who are blood relatives only. This means that an individual cannot partake on the sourmilk outside the kraal of his or her blood relatives. By eating sourmilk of a certain family means that one cannot marry nor have any sexual relationship with the members of that particular family. This rule also applies to a newly- married bride. According to the rules of exogamous marriage a young bride does not partake of any milk products from the family herd of her new home until a ritual of the eating of sourmilk is conducted by her in-laws. However, there is no fixed period for the celebration of this ritual. The celebration is usually decided by a family concerned. Other families conduct it a very long time after marriage. According to Canonici (1995:165) a woman cannot partake of the milk products of her intended in-law's until she has shown her fertility and has become a full member of the clan, through her child, by producing an heir. This means that a young bride has to discipline herself by showing self-control towards the eating of sourmilk. Krige (1947:188-189) maintains that the violation of any of the numerous milk taboos is believed to bring weakness and disaster upon the cattle.

#### **7.9.1 Primacy of intelligence and determination**

The informants mentioned that the mouse has neither a house nor food of its own amongst human dwellings. The only refuge is its hole. What impressed the informants most about it, is that it never fails to survive and reach its goals. In their point of view a mouse has a very strong will to succeed.

If humans become suspicious of its presence in their houses, they quickly chase it with cats or lay traps near its hole, instead of giving it food. In such a situation the mouse clearly becomes a hunted foreigner in a strange and harsh environment. The mouse faces another challenge as it cannot save itself by sheer physical strength since humans are stronger than it. However, in this battle of survival, the mouse does not sit back. It makes an attempt for a practical action.

Since it cannot fight its human opponents, it has to shun them in order to fulfill its needs because it has to survive.

Let us compare this situation of the mouse to that of newly-married bride. The young bride is also a stranger in a foreign environment because she is the only new member amongst the siblings who share the same blood, traditions and language. In the new home the young bride is the only person who is unfamiliar with the established norms of her new family. She is faced with a whole range of restrictions. She has to acknowledge places where she is not supposed to tread. She is not supposed to communicate with the adult males directly. It has been already mentioned that there are kinds of food she is forbidden to eat. In my opinion these restrictions appear like 'cultural traps' set to catch the newly-married bride. Like a mouse, she too needs to shun these 'traps'. Like a mouse she has to overcome hardship whatever the cost is.

She needs to create all possible ways to victory. She has to develop self-assurance which is blended with calm reasoning, clever planning and a strong sense of determination to overcome the overwhelming odds she comes across in her new home. Perseverance is another factor that the young bride needs to develop to overcome obstacles in her way.

#### **7.9.2 The essence of perseverance**

Perseverance is the mother of success. To express the same sentiment in Zulu, the following proverb is used: *inj'iyawaqed'amanzi ngolimi* (the dog eventually finishes water licking it with its tongue). Besides being intelligent and cunning a mouse can also be described as an animal equipped with perseverance and courage which also seem to crown its success. In the midst of hungry cats and human traps, it never fails to find means to fulfill its needs. It moves with steadfast courage even in the darkness of the night. With a calm and determined movement it eventually reaches its destination.

Beidelman quoted in Canonici [op.cit.: 82] maintains that amongst animals reflected in folktales the hare is successful because he represents the positive values of Kaguru culture, which show approved behavioural patterns. To be successful in Zulu society calls the young bride to adhere to the established norms set by society which Beidelman refers to as approved behavioural patterns.

The folktale: uMamba kaMaquba can assist us in illustrating a clear picture of acceptable and unacceptable patterns of behaviour in a marriage context.

The eldest sister went to marry Mamba that was a snake. When she arrived, Mamba was away but the old people told her what to prepare for his arrival. They advised her to grind dry maize because Mamba ate fine food only. She was also told not to panic at the arrival of her prospective spouse as he would be in a form of a snake. The prospective bride accepted with admiration the advice of the old people. Mamba arrived and married her because he found her respectful and compliant. One time she visited her home people to show them her baby.

Seeing the success of her elder sister, the younger sister also went to marry Mamba. She arrived at Mamba's home in great pride. The old people came to help her as they had done to her sister. Since she was blinded by envy and pride she would not listen to them. Mamba came and she ran away when she saw that he was a snake, and that was the end of her marriage.

The younger sister behaved like *imbulu* (a monitor lizard). In all the folktales *imbulu* is reflected as a pretender that enters marriage through deception by being somebody it is not. Eventually, it is always caught and its true colours clearly show.

In the folktale uNoqandakazana, Noqandakazana driven by envy went to marry her sister's husband through deception. She too was eventually caught. She went to marry the second time. Her second husband had a snake that he kept in a pot. He told Noqandakazana not to

open the pot. Through obstinacy she opened it and the snake killed her.

In both folktales, the two unsuccessful brides were driven by envy for the social status of being married. They did not consider that the success of their sisters was an award for their own sacrifice, effort and self-discipline. For the survival of their marriages the two successful brides listened when they were advised. They were also prepared to learn the traditions of their new homes whatever the cost was. They persevered and through perseverance they both passed the test, while their conceited and willful sisters shamefully lost the battle. This shows that perseverance in the face of superior odds helps one to refine his or her character. Perseverance is the mother of success which means that if an individual endures up to the end, she or he eventually gains high integrity in the eyes of society that promotes acceptable patterns of behaviour for the good of society.

To learn a new way of life a learner needs to comply with his or her educators. In my opinion a bride is like a learner in an educational institution. Learning always involves challenges. Challenges have to be confronted and overcome through perseverance, courage and determination and not through deception. Marriage is one of the aspects of life with numberless challenges that have to be overcome.

In the coming discussion another challenge facing a young bride is highlighted.

### 7.9.3 *Ukuzila or ukuhlonipha (respect) of names*

Another central task the newly -married bride faces in a Zulu family in particular is the establishment of means of relating to senior male members in order to maintain a respectful atmosphere. *Ukuzila* or *ukuhlonipha* (respect) of names by avoiding certain syllables is a long- standing tradition in Zulu. This means that a bride coming to marry in a Zulu family has to respect the names of her father- in-law as well as other senior male figures of the family.

This means that she has to acquaint herself with the culture of her new home by learning the appropriate verbal cues of respect to avoid being judged as impolite or uncultured. For example, if her father-in-law's first name is *manzi* (water) she may change the word *amanzi* to *amakwete* which is a *hlonipha* word for water in Zulu. In this case the entire word has been substituted. In other instances it can be avoidance of one syllable as shown in the following example: *gadla* (to strike) might be changed to *nadla*. In Zulu tradition it is not only the individual's character or status that are honoured, even one's first name has to be respected. It appears that in marriage a young bride has to adapt herself to new experience as part of her marital obligations.

#### 7.10 A child in marriage is a woman's pride

Krige [op.cit: 61] states: "To a woman, childlessness is the greatest of all misfortunes." Pottow (1990:68) agrees: "Childlessness is a great affliction for a married woman and her own people."

A number of informants mentioned that the association of a mouse with marriage might derive from the fact that a mouse gives birth to many pups.

The folktale "uDumudumu" gives us a picture of how the situation was for the barren wife, uNyumbakatali. This picture becomes more lucid when the crow children are also made to ridicule the infertile wife. Since she had no child she was regarded as worthless.

As a queen, Nyumbakatali's distress was most severe as she was an object of both pity and ridicule in the eyes of her own husband, Dumudumu, as well as the entire nation as she was unable to give birth to a son who would take over the kingdom after the death of Dumudumu.

Liss writing about Arab mothers in Morocco in Birns (1988:113) states:

"Having children represents a change in status for a woman, especially if she is lucky enough to produce a male child...Her children represent security for her old age."

The folktale tells us that while Nyumbakatali was on the field, two doves came and asked her why she was crying. She told them that it was because she was infertile. The two doves incised her. Out of her legs came two human children who were a boy and a girl.

It is said that after the birth of these two human children, Nyumbakatali was promoted to the position of the chief wife because she had given the nation the right descendants to maintain the lineage of their King, Dumudumu. Before that she was just a woman who was good for nothing.

Traces of this horror of traumatising infertile women are also found among religious communities in the Bible. For example, Sarah, the wife of Abraham, Elizabeth, the mother of John, the Baptist, and Hanna, the mother of Samson suffered from this fate. From the Biblical point of view, childlessness was interpreted as a curse coming direct from God for one's sins. The harassment of barren women has existed for many centuries and almost every nation has contributed to this cruelty.

It appears that a child in marriage is particularly a woman's victory and her pride because without it she is worthless. If a child credits so much to its mother's social status it is no wonder that African women often give birth to many children probably to double up their credits. This reminds me of Dr. Royeppen of Assisi Hospital in Port Shepstone. She used to rebuke the African women for giving birth almost every two years. She would say to them: "You always pruu... pruu...pruu...like a mouse every year." However, this is how the traditionalists who had large families would have responded to Dr. Royeppen's remarks:

"A woman who can carry out a pregnancy every two years, breast-feeding the youngest child and looking after the toddlers, was certainly a 'treasure'."  
Segalen, [op.cit.:108]



### 7.10.1 **The child as a social asset**

The Zulu proverb says: *ukuzal' ukuzelul' amathambo* (giving birth is to lengthen one's bones). According to this proverb, the birth of a child is a regeneration of one's self. In other words, it is an advent of one's younger self. It means that it is through one's child that the family lineage is maintained.

In the folktale of Dumudumu it also appears that the absence of a child in marriage is an issue of serious concern, but not only for the two parents but for the whole nation, as the nation also looked up to the descendants of King Dumudumu for its survival and prosperity.

Every nation banks its future on its youth. Dreams and aspirations of the nation can be fulfilled through its young generation. When the old generation dies, the young one is there to continue from where the former left. Through its youth the nation is regenerated and sustained. Mbiti [op.cit.:131] writing about marriage and procreation from an African perspective maintains that the man or woman who has nobody to remember after his or her physical death experiences the worst misfortune and punishment that one can suffer. From an African point of view, to die without a child makes one cut off from human society. Such an individual becomes an outcast since he or she is physically disconnected from society.

### 7.10.2 **Maternal care**

Roberts writing about maternal dilemmas as well as mothers who fail to protect their children in Hanigsberg (1999: 34) states: "No woman achieves her full position in society until she becomes a mother." This statement highlights the point that there is no use having a child in marriage if there is no caring mother to nurture it. Bardens (1987:147) states: "The word mother implies caretaker."

The informants mentioned that a mouse has neither a house nor possessions of its own

within our dwellings that it can claim as its own, but it never goes hungry or without shelter because the female mouse in particular is exceptionally adorned with the gifts of caring and nurturing.

The following proverbs also reflect a deep-seated relationship between a mother and her child: *imbuzi ilele phezu kwezinyane* which means that the goat protects its kid. *Inkukhu iqhwandela amatshwele ayo.* (the hen is scraping food for its chickens.) *Unina ngunina maZulu!* (a mother is the mother, Zulus!) Which, means that a mother's side is the surest side.

All in all these proverbs tell us that a mother is a versatile figure with infinite nurturing capabilities which no one else can substitute. In other words a relationship between the mother and her child is unique and indescribable. The following proverb explains this better: *intandane enhle ngumakhothwa ngunina.* This proverb means that a child can have everyone around it, but if it has no mother it is regarded as an orphan. According to Zulu thought, a motherless child has lost it all because it has no one to give it moral support and direction the way its mother would do. Scarr (1987:56), examining an aspect of caring as a vital communal service from mothers' point of view writes:

“The good mother, the wise mother is more important to the community than even the ablest man; her career is more worth of honor and is more useful to the community than the career of any man, no matter how successful he can be.”

The aspect of motherhood takes us to a greater dimension of marriage. This position of being a mother shows us that marriage alone is not enough for a married woman to acquire her full social status. This means that until a married woman holds a child in her arms and nurtures it with absolute care, her mission in marriage is not yet accomplished. In many societies a child is the most significant sign of a successful marriage and a living image of well-shared marriage responsibilities between the wife and husband.

Responsible behaviour is an all-embracing aspect of life as it includes requirements concerning respect, concern for others, self-discipline, leadership, integrity, loyalty, honesty and morality. It is also a basis of trust and a stepping-stone towards healthy relationships and mutual understanding amongst members of society.

The following discussion sets out to explore the metaphoric references to the word *inja* (dog) to identify different aspects of responsible behaviour. In search of these metaphoric references to the dog, the intention is not to give one implication. Instead, several examples which are thought to be possible situations for the application of the dog referent will be examined from a Zulu perspective in order to highlight the aspects of responsible behaviour and to identify the impact irresponsible behaviour has on our social relationships in family life as well as outside the environment of the home.

One of the major responsibilities that faces almost every couple in marriage is bringing up children. A child in marriage can be both a blessing and a responsibility when we consider tasks and challenges that bringing up a child comes with.

Parents can be held responsible for the misconduct of their children although the former did not give any consent on such misconduct.

### **7.11 The stolen eggs**

The system of rearing domestic animals and poultry in rural areas is quite different from that of the metropolitan. In rural areas, most people do not keep their fowls in fowl-runs. During the day fowls move around in the open. This situation makes things very difficult for the hens laying eggs as dogs also loiter in the area day and night looking for food, and a hungry dog cannot resist the temptation to steal raw eggs.

When a dog steals eggs, it makes sure that whatever it does during that time is done fast to avoid being caught red handed by the owner of the eggs. This rush usually leads to physical harassment towards the hen. The hen can get hurt while the dog forces it out of its nest to get the eggs underneath. It is possible that some of the eggs also get smashed while the hen fights with an enemy. Some dogs eat both the eggs and the hen.

Fowls are reared for their eggs, meat and for economic purposes. The consumption of the eggs is a severe loss for both the owner and people who enjoy them. As a result, the dog that steals eggs from the neighbour's hens gets a severe reprimand.

Let us now take this issue of the devoured eggs to a human context.

#### 7.11.1 **Effects of illegitimate pregnancy**

The expression: *inja yakho isidle amaqanda* (your dog has eaten the eggs) is often heard when a girl falls pregnant prior to marriage. When a girl falls pregnant prior to marriage there is a certain procedure that is followed. However, I will not get into all the subtle details of the proceedings. I will highlight only the most important things, which usually take place: the women of the village who are the same age as the mother of the pregnant girl, escort the girl to the home of the boy who is regarded as the suspect.

When these women arrive at the boy's home, the father of the boy has to ask them what their coming is all about. The women should answer with the following expression: *inja yakho isidle amaqanda*. (your dog has eaten the eggs) The father of the boy should understand that one of his boys has sexually misbehaved because this expression is used only in connection with illegitimate pregnancy.

The girl has to give the name of the culprit to confirm the case. If the boy is also responsible

for the deflowering of the girl's virginal state, it means that there are two charges laid against him at the same time. In that case the father of the boy has to pay the *inhlawulo* (fine or reparation) for both charges, as custom requires.

Let us examine both the images of a dog and the eggs in this context. When the girl's escorts arrived at the boy's home, they referred to the boy who was a suspect as a dog. Amongst them there was a girl whom they referred to as 'eggs' which they claimed the dog has eaten. In this scene we have two groups, opposite to each other. On one side there is a 'dog' with his father, and on the other side, there is a victim with the escorts. Normally, a dog does not hide itself when it is eating a bone even if it has picked it up from the neighbour's premises. But when it is eating stolen eggs, it makes sure that it is not seen by anyone else. Almost the same thing happens with humans. For example, when a married woman conceives, there is no secret about it. The members of the family are informed to await the arrival of a new member of the family. When the child is born, the family members come together to welcome the new member of their family.

Traditionally, it is the father of the child who gives it its name as a way of accepting it as his own child and taking the responsibility for bringing it up. Things differ with unmarried couples especially when they are still minors.

#### 7.11.2 Dishonesty

There is great secrecy involved in their romantic relationships, especially if they are still minors. Youngsters play many tricks which parents might not be aware of in the beginning. For example, if a boy deflowers a girl prior to marriage, the two might keep it a secret to avoid a reprimand. This means that if the girl does not conceive, the deflowering might remain a secret between the two. Due to this secrecy pregnancy usually comes as a shock to many parents. This secrecy about pregnancy might jeopardise both the health of the expectant mother and the infant because they have no access to medical treatment and care. Normally,

pregnancy is not supposed to come as a surprise neither to parents of a girl nor to the members of the community as (Mbiti (1969:107) points out:

“In African societies, the birth of a child is a process which begins long before the child’s arrival in this world and continues long thereafter... Pregnancy is the first indication that a new member of society is on the way.”

The other aspect that comes with covered pregnancy is that of dishonesty. For example, if the girl’s people do not come to the boys’ family to report pregnancy the boy walks tall in the eyes of his parents as an innocent individual. According to a Zulu thought this is a ‘doggish’ behaviour because a dog that steals eggs does the same thing. If nobody catches it on the scene, it remains innocent in the eyes of both its owner and the neighbour whose eggs it has stolen. Whether the dog has been caught or not it has been dishonest to its owner and it has vandalised the neighbour’s property. Such an irresponsible act might lead to conflict amongst the neighbours. Its owner can face charges laid by the owner of the eggs.

Like a dishonest dog the boy who is responsible for the girl’s pregnancy is also perceived as a thief who steals a right which is acquired through matrimony.

“A particular problem is that our young men tend to expect the right to have sex before they get married.” (Mtshali in Education/Indaba, 2000:1)

Pregnancy prior to marriage is a premature practice which is often a result of a casual or one-off sexual encounter, which is usually driven by infatuation and a sense of lust. Blinded by these emotions the boy loses self-control which makes him disregard the moral rule. As a result, he engages into reckless sexual relationship which eventually leads to his disgrace as well as that of his partner.

### 7.11.3 **The dangers of dishonesty in a relationship**

It has been already mentioned in chapter two that if African people want to make their renaissance a reality, they need to make responsible choices. In this context, a choice is between responsible sexual behaviour which is based on trust and love, and reckless or casual sexual behaviour which is often driven by lust and shallow emotions.

Partners, in particular, need to make an effort to keep their relationships stable by being trustful, honest and respectful to each other to avoid opening chances for each other of engaging into casual sexual relationship which might eventually lead to a break in their relationship. The breaking of a relationship is usually caused by the lack of trust and respect between partners. It is also the loss of trust between partners that often leads to a risk of contracting or spreading HIV/Aids because when one's partner is lost, the chances of engaging in a casual relationships are open. One of the partners who has not been honest in a previous relationship will probably continue with his or her way of life in a new relationship. If such a partner is a carrier of the Aids virus, chances for the spread of this virus are many because the carrier is not an honest person. He or she may not disclose to her or his new partners that he or she is already infected by a deadly virus. Engaging in a sexual relationship with such a dishonest person is risky because true love is based on trust and openness.

Casual sexual relationships which are often driven by lust and infatuation seem to be the core cause of the spread of HIV/Aids. It is assumed that spread of HIV/Aids is accelerating because the moral fibre in society is broken.

Old people in the black communities are often heard saying: "Who will bury us if so many of our young people die of AIDS?" In 2000 KwaZulu-Natal alone had 36.2% (1 in 3 people) HIV infected. (Antenatal statistics, 2000 in the Archdiocese of Durban Newsletter, 2002:6) According to Sub-Saharan Africa (2001:1) at the end of 2001, the region's adult (15-49)

HIV/AIDS prevalence rate was 8.4 percent.

The AIDS statistics calculated at the end of 1999, published by UNAIDS in the “Report on the Global HIV/AIDS Epidemic June 2000” show that the total estimates of deaths of adults and children across the countries of Sub-Saharan Africa was 2,204,200. Of these total deaths estimates, Ethiopia with 280, 000 rates the highest number of deaths, followed by both Nigeria and South Africa, each with 250,000 deaths.

If this statement is taken into consideration, it appears that the escalating number of people affected by HIV/AIDS does not only scare the old people but it is a concern of the whole continent because it is not only young people who die. But because they are the future of the continent, we seem to be more concerned about their well-being.

#### 7.12 **Respect for life versus the use of a condom**

“Be wise, condomise. The condom is the only thing that can protect us from unwanted pregnancy, STIs and HIV/AIDS.” (LoveLife, 2000:14)

Prevention is better than cure. But to say that the condom is the only thing that can protect people from the HIV/Aids pandemic is questionable. It can be argued that it is not the condom per se that can save people from the HIV/Aids pandemic. The condom is a commercial product which cannot be fully guaranteed for the safety of people.

“It is very grim for the continent if one thinks that about 2020 more than 20 percent of Sub-Saharan population will be wiped away by Aids, despite campaigns to raise awareness for the use of condoms.” {Allafrica, 2001:1}

{Allafrica [op.cit.:2]} further states:

“People do not use the condom, even the most educated. If people die despite campaigns to raise awareness for the use of condoms, it appears that there



could be other options to look into.”

There could be various reasons for failure of people to use condoms. One of these reasons could be ignorance about the value of life. People are life. Life needs to be protected.

People need to understand that condoms are primarily made to protect life, not to release sexual tension. The above statements seem to give us an understanding that as long as an individual has a condom, he or she can engage in sex. In my opinion, an act made with such intention is still not safe because it was an act which was carried out without an intention to protect the whole person. A person is not just one part of the body that is protected by the condom. The body, soul, spirit and emotional state of an individual need to be catered for and protected. Such a protection may not be achieved by the use of a condom.

If the reason for using the condom is not based on the protection of the whole person, but it is only used as a tool for relieving one from emotional stress, it might be said that the use of a condom in such a context is not worth it.

Engaging in casual sexual relationships whether wearing a condom or not does not appear to be responsible behaviour because consequences that usually come out of such a relationship are not often the kind that makes one proud. To have a condom available need not to be the deciding factor for an individual to have sex. Sex is a decent act when it is practised out of love. It is not just an outlet for those who want to release themselves from their stress. It is not for those who are playing the game of take a taste and go because there is a condom to protect them.

### **7.13 True love versus lust**

People also seem to confuse love with lust. True love is a contraceptive itself because true love respects someone else's dignity and values. Such a love involves responsibility because a true loving person often sacrifices one's feelings for the sake of maintaining one's

reputation as well as the moral fibre of society. To live a life with integrity first calls one to love oneself and that of the other person. One's love for one partner seems to be the most effective and reliable 'contraceptive' for protecting our society from HIV/Aids. An African Renaissance might be a given era for people of the African continent to re-think about how they make choices, especially those that involve relationships. The 're-' in the word renaissance seems to carry a special message for the African people. It seems to challenge them to revive and re-activate their conscience by promoting moral values which can help people to prepare for the manifestation of the renaissance. The 're-' in the renaissance may also be telling the people of Africa to be responsible and respectful in their social relationships.

#### **7.14 The egg concept: the girl's responsibility**

In this context a girl is referred to as "eggs." According to Zulu thought, a sealed egg symbolises the body of a girl that is not yet engaged in sexual relationship. That means that her body is still intact. Eggs are always handled with great caution because they are fragile. Fractured eggs are not good neither for breeding nor consumption. The hen abandons all the damaged eggs when breeding. This is why it takes absolute care to protect them from any damage. Like a hen that fights with a dog that steals its eggs, a girl too has to fight with whoever attempts to ruin her social status, self-esteem, her pride and honour through irresponsible sexual relationship. Caring for and protecting her own body is her primary responsibility. She should have strong morals and also strive to live by them in order to maintain her integrity in a society that values virginal matrimony.

"When a child becomes pregnant she must stay home for two years. Pregnancy is not right, so it is the parent's duty to ensure that the child does not fall pregnant." (Patricia Boikanyo, in *The Teacher* 2000:10)

The issue of pregnancy amongst school-girls in our country has evoked a high pitch of

controversy. Some educationists maintain that pregnant learners have a right to learn with their protruding tummies. Others maintain that allowing pregnant girls to attend school when they are fully pregnant may have a negative impact on other young people who are still encouraged to be morally responsible as future citizens.

It is assumed that the implementation of the movement called 'Moral Regeneration' which was launched in 18 April 2002 in Pretoria is an initiative to revive the moral fibre of society. This movement might help people to adopt objective morals that are based on reality, reason, self-esteem and respect for the other person. People seem to see no value in living life with integrity which promotes healthy social relationships. Rational or good behaviour increases prosperity, happiness and mutual relationship.

If Africa wants to enjoy its renaissance to the full, it needs to enhance moral values. With the spread of Aids in African countries in particular, the enforcement of moral code should be seen as something inescapable. Moral values build one's character and helps one to make responsible choices that promote the well-being of society.

“Any chosen action that purposely benefits the human organisms or society is morally good and right... Any chosen action that purposely harms the human organism or society is morally bad and wrong.” {Good and Bad Actions, 2001:1}

#### 7.14.1 **A penalty for a girl's mother**

In the case of pregnancy prior to marriage the girl's mother is not exempted from parental responsibility. With the mother of a girl the charges for the misconduct of her daughter involves *ilobolo* (a bride's wealth). This *ilobolo* is compulsory in Zulu culture because traditionally there is no lawful marriage without it.

“The *lobola* agreement is an agreement between the groom or his guardian

who act as representatives of their families, to transfer cattle or some other form of payment to the bride's family. Once this agreement has been transferred, the wedding ceremony takes place" (Reader's Digest, 1982:252)

The *ilobolo* (a bride's wealth) of a daughter of a commoner, that is, an ordinary citizen without any portfolio, is worth eleven cattle. My concern is with the eleventh cow which is called *inkomo kanina* (a mother's cow). This cow is a token of gratitude to the mother for nurturing her daughter up to the marriageable stage, and moreover for presenting her to her husband as a virgin. Strictly speaking, it is the second duty that earns her this award. To earn it, she has to take a strong stand that her daughter does not engage in irresponsible sexual behaviour prior to marriage. But if a girl is deflowered or becomes pregnant prior to marriage her *ilobolo* decreases and the mother of a girl does not get this eleventh cow because: "Deflowering a girl in traditional society was a serious offense... even worse if she had fallen pregnant." (Biyela, 1998:37) A breach of such moral rules is according to Canonici in Biyela [op.cit:38] a property taboo, which calls for penalty when trespassed.

The mother suffers a penalty for a moral trespass by her daughter. According to a social rule a mother too has to be held responsible for the misdeed of her daughter as the father of the boy who made her daughter pregnant was also charged for the misdeed of his son. The father of the boy was charged because his boy devoured the neighbour's "eggs". And thus the mother is also held responsible because her daughter gave the 'dog' a chance to eat the 'eggs'. This means that without her consent the boy could not have got access to her body. In other words the actions of her daughter are not different from that of the "dog" that harassed her. Due to the lack of strong moral value on her side, she has put her own mother in trouble.

#### 7.14.2 **A parental responsibility**

The issue of the stolen eggs started with two youngsters but its consequences have extensive repercussions as parents of these youngsters are also involved.

I asked the informants why the parents of the youngsters are also held responsible for the misconduct of their children. The majority of them responded with the following proverb: *inja ibambela umniniyo*. (a dog represents its owner) According to the informants this proverb, *inja ibambela umniniyo* originates from the habits of the dogs at hunting games in the veld. The following testimony attempts to illustrate to us what usually happens at the hunting games where different dogs seem to be representatives of their owners:

Zenzele Myeza on 12.12.99:

The proverb *inja ibambela umniniyo* (the dog catches for its owner) means that one takes responsibility for his own child. I think people formulated this proverb from what the dog usually does about its kill during hunting. When there are many dogs at a hunt, a dispute usually arises among hunters over the ownership of *inyamazane* (a buck). The hunters who usually come first to the scene after a kill have a tendency of claiming a buck as theirs. They might say that their dogs have killed it. But experienced hunters should not be intimidated by such false claims.

The actions of each dog after a chase are a good guide towards the rightful ownership of the kill. A dog that actually killed the buck never leaves it alone. It stands by its side until its owner arrives. You may try to chase it away but it consistently returns to guard its kill. The identification of the dog that laid a fatal wound on the buck is done through the understanding of such actions.

Buzetsheni M. Mdletshe on 6.4.99

The eyes of the dog that killed the buck never move away from it. It goes to its kill and licks it. To a dog licking is a sign of ownership. The licking in front of everyone else also confirms to the hunters that the prey belongs to it.

T.W Mabuya on 12.12.99:

*Inja ibambela umniniyo* (The dog catches for its owner) originates from the social behaviour of the dog at a hunt. A well-trained dog never abandons a buck it has killed. It watches over it until its owner comes. Sometimes there are problems with regard to the right of ownership of the buck if there are many dogs chasing it. My dog is

unique. It always strikes the buck at the back of the neck. To ensure that the kill belongs to it, I always look for the wounds at this place. My fellow hunters also know about my dog's markings. The checking of the wisdom teeth of the dogs on a hunt also help in the identification of the dog that struck the fatal wound on the buck. A dog whose wisdom teeth gums are sore or sometimes bleeding shows that that particular dog was the first one to strike the buck because a buck fights violently at the first fatal wounds.

The above testimony leaves us with a picture that hunting is a social game as well as a form of competition where dogs display their hunting skills and their commitment to the service rendered to them by their owners. Hunting also gives dogs a chance to impress their owners. Each dog runs the chase with all its 'Olympic' excellence to catch a buck to present it to its owner as a token of its service. In a chase, each dog seems to represent its owner who cannot qualify for the speed that is required during the chase.

There is a point that one needs to take note of with regard to the dog and its kill. The informants unanimously agreed on the fact that a well-trained dog never eats its kill or leave it by itself. Instead it waits on it until the arrival of its owner. This means that in the absence of its owner, it takes all responsibility over its kill. This is responsible behaviour from a loyal representative. Such behaviour shows that a dog can do its duties effectively even in the absence of its master. In other words, a dog to its master is a friend in need and a friend in deed. The other point that the informants strongly emphasised was that of a master who rejoices over a kill presented to him by his dog. The owner praises his dog as an excellent hunter and further claims the dog's kill as his own property due to the fact that the dog belongs to him.

From the informants' point of view, if the dog interferes with someone else's property its owner accordingly should stand by it and take responsibility on its behalf. It should be mentioned that it is not always easy for the owner to take responsibility on behalf of his dog. But he or she has no choice. On the other side this does not mean that a dog that does not behave should not be reprimanded. The point here is that the dog together with its

unruly behaviour still belongs to the owner. One cannot part the two. It is like the dog and its kill. They both belong to the same owner.

Most parents often behave like dog masters. When things go well with their children, they love them and praise them. If their children misbehave some parents might be tempted to disown their children to save themselves from the blame and disgrace because taking sides with a disgraceful individual is not always easy for anyone else. Like the owners of dogs parents too seem to have no choice. Coming to the case of both the boy and the girl who sexually misbehave prior to marriage, the informant explained that their parents should be accountable for the unruly behaviour of their children, especially if their children are still minors because it is the primary duty of parents to provide their children with both spiritual and material needs and to guide them into the right path until they are fully independent citizen who can take full responsibility for their own actions.

What the proverb seems to highlight in this context through the dog metaphor is the point that children belong to their parents as dogs belong to their owners. Therefore, parents have a binding duty to look after their children with a sharp eye to avoid trouble. Katz in Biyela (1995:41) also highlights the parental responsibility of bringing up their children to develop a sound character:

“Closely related with parental duty to nurture health and education is the parent’s responsibility to teach the child respect for authority and people and to provide it with a moral environment. In it, it may develop a sound character.”

The analysis of the proverb *inja ibambela umninyo* still continues but this time the discussion takes us out of the family environment into a wider framework. The objective is still the identification of aspects of responsible behaviour, to show that the dog metaphor is not only limited to parents and their children. It can also be an appropriate referent in the relationship that exists between those in authority and their subjects.

### 7.15 Authority versus subject

According to Doke/Vilakazi *Dictionary* (1972:572) *inja* (dog) also means a low-class and inferior person. If there is a subordinate, there should be a superior who is in charge of the former. Being on a higher rank than the other person is a privilege that is accompanied by great responsibility. A superior or a leader is one who has accepted a higher responsibility than the rest of the group concerned. In other words, being a superior or leader means accepting a responsibility. It is also a challenge that calls one to go out of himself or herself in order to care, motivate, direct, advise and protect those under his or her jurisdiction.

In the drama *uNtombazi* (1979:69) Dladla put the following words into the mouth of Noluju: “*Shaka omkhulu! Ngiyinja yakho.*” (Shaka the great! I am your dog) which are used as a royal form of address for the Zulu kings. The words of Noluju can be interpreted in many ways but in my opinion Noluju was made to surrender himself completely into the hands of his king. He had to place his entire being upon the shoulders of his king as a dog entirely looks up to its owner for its wellbeing and survival.

### 7.16 The achievers

There are a few examples that I intend to use concerning the actions of our present authorities to further identify aspects of responsible behaviour through the dog metaphor. The first example is about the Olympic Games.

Like dogs on a chase that represent their owners, the participants also enter these games on behalf of their countries. If an entrant is awarded with gold, that gold is for the whole country which she or he represents. As a result, the whole country rejoices together with the victor. It is the president of the country who feels most honoured when his people make great achievements in international championships. Such achievers make the president concerned



greatly proud because his people create a good image of his country in the world of international champions. He appears in the eyes of the world as a successful statesman. Likewise, the country suffers emotional stress when its athletes do not come back with medals from the Olympic games. Despite the disappointing results, the athletes still belong to the president as well as the entire country. They are his unsuccessful “dogs”.

#### **7.17 A leader behind his subjects**

There was great emotional turmoil in the whole of South Africa for the Strydoms, namely Monique and Callie, who were held hostage by the Philippine in the year 2000. However, it was not overtly said in the media why they were held hostage. Almost every South African was praying for their release. But the citizen who suffered most during their captivity was President Mbeki. Why? The president was for this particular situation ‘an owner’. The hostages were his ‘dogs’. But for whatever reasons the Philippine captured them, Mbeki as their superior was automatically held responsible. A responsible owner of the dog should know the whereabouts of his dog after letting it off the chain. He or she has to keep an eye on it to avoid trouble. The same applies to President Mbeki. A responsible owner of the dog should know the whereabouts of his dog after letting it off the chain. He or she has to keep an eye on it to avoid trouble. In this context the same thing might apply to President Mbeki. He had to answer for their being there because the permit to leave his country is under his control. From the Philippines’ point of view, he had to know the whereabouts of every one of his subjects. The hostages are his “dogs.” Whatever the reason for the capture of his “dogs” is, the hardship they faced in that hostage also rested heavily upon his shoulders.

For Mbeki to show the world that he is a responsible and a statesman with integrity, he had to take a strong stand for the release of his ‘dogs’. This could be one of the reasons for his sending the South African High Commissioner, Lindiwe Mabuza to Malaysia, to be a standby in the Philippines until the release of the hostages. When Monique was freed, President Mbeki

welcomed the news:

“We believe it is a step in the right direction and hope that a basis has now been laid for the release of Callie and the other remaining hostages.” (The Mercury, 28 August 2000)

To show his responsibility and jubilation for the release of his subjects, he eventually, threw a huge dinner for them. It should be remembered that it was not only Mbeki’s “dogs” who were held hostages in the Philippines by then. When Monique was interviewed after her release she confirmed that she left many hostages of other countries behind her husband included. The success of President Mbeki in getting his “dogs” released may give rise to a variety of interpretations. Some people may think that Mbeki succeeded in getting his subjects home because he used all possible diplomatic means to fight for their release. However, others may argue that he was not showing any sense of responsibility or jubilation but he wanted to maintain the public relations value of riding on the popular press band-wagon. But did other world leaders not want to be in the headlines or on the press band-wagon? It is not known exactly what his personal motives were. Our concern in this context is the stand he took for the release of his subjects. It is presumed that the image of his “two dogs” captured reflected upon his own image as the owner. It has been already said that a dog together with its character belongs to the same owner.

In April 2001 Botswana court gave Mariette Bosch a death sentence for killing her friend, Ria. The family of the former also contacted Mbeki to ask him to plead with the government of Botswana on behalf of his “dog.” Unfortunately, President Festus Mogae turned down clemency. Another of Mbeki’s “dogs” had misbehaved. It had killed Mogae’s “dog”. The conflict started with the two “dogs, which means it was a subject versus a subject. But the matter ended with a president versus a president. Mbeki had to answer again to Mogae on behalf of his subject as he had answered to the Philippine on behalf of the hostages.

## 7.18 A leader in search of the culprits

On September eleven the terrorists bombed down the two towers of the World Trade Centre in America. In this context these terrorists can be referred to as ruthless “ dogs.” Whether or not their masters were aware of what their dogs were planning with regards to the bombing of the twin towers, President Bush has made himself clear as he has said that he would leave no stone unturned in punishing those responsible for this horror. This means that terrorists together with their countries or supporters will suffer the same fate. Bush’s words might be interpreted as saying that the ruthless “dogs” that struck his magnificent towers down to a useless rumble of steel and ashes represent their owners. When Bush sees a terrorist, he simultaneously sees the latter’s superior. For Bush the active terrorists were intentionally released by their irresponsible “owners” to destroy his “dogs”. For Bush these terrorists are not fatherless and without supporters. It is like father like son. According to Bush the dog and its master have to suffer alike in order to protect his own subjects who look up to him for security. It is assumed that the “owners” of the terrorists rejoiced over the horror that befell America as the hunter rejoices over the kill he obtains through the service of his dog.

## Conclusion

Courtship strongly features two-dimensional aspects as it involves both dynamic romantic enterprise and rivalry amongst young males. The yearning of young people to be intimately close to someone to provide an integrated and satisfying romantic life shows that they have an inherent need to be integrated into some group through a mutual relationship. Having a romantic partner means going out of loneliness. But this initiative requires a commitment that is based on co-responsibility.

Although a detailed drama of events is not elaborately depicted in the courtship proverbs themselves, it is somehow reflected that the real momentum of rivalry derives from

competition-laden issues. In a competition every contestant wants to win at the expense of others. However, prospective partners who manage to handle emotional stress appropriately and fight together to overcome tribulations can enhance the quality of their relationship by striving courageously and responsibly in a competitive environment until they get married.

Marriage is a two dimensional adventure. Firstly, through their marital status married people enjoy security and protection, honourable public ranking and personal gratification due to the fact that they have someone to share romantic feelings with.

According to a Zulu thought marriage is meant to be a first hand experience for every young woman who enters it. There are no marriage trials. Due to fear and disappointment with regard to marriage, some people tend to think of alternatives for example, sending big and small mice 'to do a survey' at a place of their marriage prior to their marriage. What the metaphor of a mouse attempts to highlight in this context of marriage is the point that marriage is a commitment which should be engaged by those who are well-armed for its challenges and responsibilities. This means that those who want their marriages to prosper, they themselves need to work for it since there are no short cuts for a lasting success.

Marriage without a child and a caring mother is lifeless in the eyes of society. Mothers are most admirable and noble members in society due to their invaluable contribution they offer for the growing generation that is, children who are the most vulnerable members of society.

In every age and in every society the aspect of responsibility is one that features strongly in matters concerning healthy social relationships. Responsibility is both a social value and a duty that requires serious attention from parents and their children and from authorities and their subjects. This means that both parents and leaders should lead by both a word of command and by example. They should be responsible to those under their authority in all spheres of life. Subjects too are called to abide by the rules of society secured in the hands of

authority.

To conclude, the primary objective of this chapter was to highlight the importance of responsible behaviour as well as to show how irresponsible behaviour affects social relationships. The focus was on personal and social values, that complex of knowledge, values, attitudes and abilities which contribute to the development of a sound moral character, a sense of community and competence in responding to the personal, social and cultural aspects of life.

All in all ethical behaviour is a matter of exercising our own individual rights and of respecting the rights of others. Our duty of behaving morally is judged by our way of being considerate towards our fellow citizens.

## Chapter 8

### CHAPTER SUMMARY AND GENERAL CONCLUSION

The primary purpose of this study was to write on proverbs by conducting research based on both animal and bird proverbs. The different aspects which were dealt with were contextualised from a Zulu socio-cultural perspective through the introduction of sources referring to images of both animals and birds, their analysis and their interpretation combined with the testimony from local informants with an aim of finding out the milieu from which these proverbs originated. My curiosity was greatly stimulated when I discovered that there still exist large numbers of local people especially in the rural areas of KwaZulu-Natal with a wealth of knowledge who clearly hold views about persons and events reflected in proverbs, and who are also able to discuss the relevant background of proverbs which are specifically selected for this study.

Since proverbs do not provide detailed descriptions of the locations or characters or images of both animals and birds which they refer to as these elements were taken for granted, a contextual study of oral literature was essential, as it would provide new perspectives for the study of proverbs, of language and of traditional knowledge.

When one is expounding a traditional text, especially on a complex study as proverbs, it is vital that one establishes a clear frame of reference, since a text is both the product of a society and a force that helps to mould that society. This is why this study concentrated on the socio-cultural aspects of proverbs.

Du Plessis in Biyela (1998:161-162) points out that when one analyses proverbs one needs to consider two kinds of contexts, that is: the immediate and the broad context. The immediate context is the sentence in which a word occurs, the preceding and following sentences, as well

as the paragraph in which the word appears. The broad context could be linked with other sections of work of a book as a whole, or other books by the same author, or even with other literature from the same period.

One has also to consider the historical and socio-cultural development of a proverb and its meaning as they may point to different meanings in different contexts. Proverbs provide interesting field for study because:

“Proverbs are distilled genius of oral cultures, perhaps even an encapsulation of the whole. They identify and dignify a culture, bringing life into wisdom and wisdom to life. Unfortunately, their potential value for modern thought and life is little recognised. Even in Africa itself, proverbs are a vanishing heritage. {African Proverbs Project} (2001:2)

The study has analysed a number of proverbial metaphors and aphorisms with themes reflecting socio-cultural values, philosophical ideas and attitudes of Zulu society reflecting *ubuntu* which is an age-old African concept which under-pins large parts of indigenous culture to promote African systems of values and norms. It pervasively serves as a cohesive moral value that reflects human dignity which flows from the deep compassion, solidarity, altruism and responsibility which are at the very core of moulding the character of a human being who can commit himself or herself to the development of human society.

From an African worldview, *ubuntu* is an indigenous prerequisite for the attainment of sustainable social relationships as it promotes values that require a national, rule-based, non-discriminatory, equitable and collective-oriented values that benefit all people in the pursuit of sustainable human dignity.

There is more to communication than just one person speaking and another one listening. Human communication involves verbal and nonverbal, oral and written, formal and informal, intentional and unintentional communication. In this study the concentration was on verbal

communication between humans in either spoken or written form. Verbal communication involves the use of linguistic symbols that mean something to those who take part in the process.

Greed and eating alone are severely castigated in an African world view. On the contrary, eating and drinking together are highly cherished humane acts because they build community through participation and sharing.

The research examines the guiding principles and set of restrictions imposed by tradition for girls and young men who are engaged in romantic relationships prior to marriage.

Courtship is regarded as a transition stage where young men are in great search for compatible partners to live life with. Traditional courtship was controlled by strict social rules and amongst Nguni clans and it was a process which took a lengthy period, as the Zulu believe that elements of genuine love and intimacy cannot be obtained instantly. Young people of both sexes have to exercise control over their sexual feelings in order to avoid the loss of one's self esteem. Casually giving away one's self for a manipulative sexual encounter is looked down upon which means that a high level of self- esteem requires one to live responsibly. One has to strive towards acquiring a good reputation which is regarded as one's self worth. Pre-marital chastity is still valued for young women and men. Those who take sexual liberty have to pay the price.

Striving towards a permanent commitment, that is sharing life totally with someone, involves challenges and rivals. Jealousy and a failure to give up are some of the challenges that often plague romantic relationships amongst young couples prior to marriage.

Marriage is a commitment which comes with love, challenges and responsibilities. A mouse is reflected in proverbs as a symbol of successful marriage due to its sense of endurance,



diligence, caring and wisdom. Perseverance is the mother of success because it enables one to rise above all odds of life. It helps one to acquire the ability to wait for an outcome with dedication and patience.

A child in marriage is a living sign of a successful marriage, and an asset to society. From an African perspective a child belongs not to the biological parents but to the extended family, lineage, clan and indeed to the whole ethnic group.

A society with young people who have visions and insight about the welfare of their society are a treasure. From a proverbial point of view a caring mother is the heart of the home and a versatile figure in society.

In Zulu society the principle of respect for persons is the foundation for one's general treatment of oneself and others. For example, when we respect other people we acknowledge their Indigenous Knowledge Systems which embody their language, their history, their religion and their culture as important aspects of their personal identity.

However, the very general nature of this principle makes it a difficult one to apply in concrete situations because the process of moral responsibility involves critical reflection upon how to translate the fundamental moral obligation of respect for persons in specific situations. This requires that the community members use mediating channels such as proverbs and idioms or aphorisms which provide codes of conduct and moral values to arrive at moral society.

While respect implies causing no harm and supporting the rights of individuals and groups to make decisions about what is in their best interest, it also involves active attempts to do well by others. By conferring the status of persons on others, the latter are obliged to adopt these responsibilities. That is, respect must be reciprocal. The following Zulu proverbs explain this statement better: *ikhoth'eyikhothayo* (it [beast] licks the one that licks it) or *izandla ziyagezana* (one hand washes the other). Both proverbs convey almost the same message which says: expect to be repaid in kinds: kindness with kindness. These proverbs go in line with the Christian teaching which says: do to others what you will like them do to you.

The study of Zulu proverbs pursues a cultural thread searching the nation building, prosperous years of the ambitious kings such as Shaka and Cetshwayo. Ferocious animals such as the buffalo, elephant, lion and leopard are reflected in a number of proverbs as symbols of power, strength, fearlessness and courage.

Proverbs have guaranteed the survival of tradition reflecting ancient traditional culture which is based on an ethical system which permeates amongst members of society through social and moral codes. By taking proverbs back to their roots, it was possible to gather the local people's insights to enable the modern reader to grasp the subtleties of the language and the power of images neatly portraying what the people of yesteryear considered beautiful and ethical to mould personalities and to promote sustainable social relationships in society.

Scholars have covered a number of specialist topics and offered a wide range of perspectives so that almost all themes in Zulu proverbs appear to have been fully exhausted in academic terms.

However, when one takes into consideration the fact that a search for Indigenous Knowledge Systems in order to re-define one's identity is gaining a momentum among the indigenous African communities even outside political organisations, it appears that there is a huge challenge ahead for indigenous communities. For example, there is a lack of field-research on both animal and birds based on their relationship with Zulu language, particularly proverbs and indigenous medicine combined with traditional local knowledge especially from black South African linguists, oral historians, traditionalists and educators.

The growing awareness towards the recognition of Indigenous Knowledge Systems shed a bright light which made a strong impact in me for the need for an integrated study of local knowledge systems in our education system. This is why this concluding chapter briefly outlines some of the problems that might have led to the marginalisation of traditional

knowledge systems in our academic institutions and contains a call for interdisciplinary studies to further explore knowledge about traditional knowledge systems that is still widely available, especially among the older people.

There is a need to record our lifestyle to go hand in hand with the language studies, especially indigenous languages which have been in existence for many years without a sound recognition which made it impossible for the two to go together to be used as effective teaching tools to obtain a deeper insight about the philosophy of the people concerned.

A language is a repository of the riches of highly special cultural experiences because it embodies a community of people and their way of being. It is a unique mental framework that gives special form to universal human experiences.

Language is culture because when a person learns a language he or she often includes all the preconceptions about that language, that is beautiful and that which has cultural associations. By speaking the language, therefore, one automatically to a greater or lesser extent aligns oneself with the culture of the language. To speak a language well one has to be able to think in that language and thought is extremely powerful. A person's mind is in a sense the centre of his or her identity.

Our local indigenous languages have long been observed to be threatened by marginalisation and are deemed heading towards the term 'endangered languages'. Such languages are the most treasured aspect of our culture considering that without them our ethnic identity as well as our Indigenous Knowledge Systems would be lost as they would no language through which to express these aspects.

Zulu is one of eleven official languages of South Africa. Although Zulu is recognised in the Constitution as an official language, it is still felt that there is not yet much done for its

development. The Zulu language like other indigenous African languages may soon be categorised as one of the endangered languages during these decades on account of modern technology and the use of foreign languages such as English. As early as the age of six when our black children have not even attained a full vocabulary of their mother tongue, much less developed any love or pride for it, they are already made to formally learn a foreign language. In that way our children derive a wrong attitude towards their mother tongue and lose respect to it when they see it being cast aside in favour of other languages.

The integration of culture in language learning might be one of the possible solutions to this problem. Culture embraces the habits, customs, social behaviour, knowledge and assumptions associated with a group of people. The cultural forms of that group are artefacts and texts, spoken and written which present the beliefs and values of a community.

The integration of Indigenous Knowledge Systems with universalised scientific knowledge systems is a processes that researchers perceive as one of the options that can be undertaken as a way towards the recognition and development of the previously disadvantaged traditional knowledge systems.

In this context, integration is concerned about connecting local knowledge with universal knowledge into a unified whole or bringing knowledge together into an understandable whole within a broader context. Such an integration can involve interrelating studies with personal experiences and all kinds of knowledge, to point out similarities which broaden an individual's context and understanding to help that particular individual realise that knowledge is an integrated or concrete whole rather than an assortment of facts about different fields of study which never interlink.

It is thought that the ideal scenario for the development and promotion of Indigenous Knowledge Systems would be to have a team of concerned local African people. For example, a team from different regions of KwaZulu-Natal might gather information about

their traditional knowledge systems. The information gathered can be transcribed into computer programming as part of their indigenous language study, and publish these writings into books or videos.

These writings or videos can be used as a tool to motivate a culture of learning, reading and writing amongst young people of different cultures in local communities. On the other side young African people may gain self-esteem through seeing that traditional knowledge from an African perspective has something to offer to both African and other societies outside Africa. If books were to be written about Indigenous Knowledge Systems, it is believed that it would greatly enhance the reading levels of young population throughout our community and at the same time the former would pick up the cultural values which have been drastically falling in the modern context.

Young people can also contribute to the development of traditional knowledge systems by engaging into community projects where they can write about their heroes they have learnt about and experiences they might have obtained during their tours to historical places. Their work can be used to substitute work that they missed at home. Such projects can bridge the gap as interdisciplinary courses. For instance, it can go across the curricular from socio-cultural studies and African indigenous language into science, communication and art, computers and even English classes. The indigenous African studies can be carried out to other areas of the curricula. This concept will bridge the gap between the indigenous studies and western studies and provide multicultural approaches in our school system, particularly during the time when South Africa is proposing a new curriculum which has to be implemented in 2005.

To conclude: "A population with great images of itself and a profound felt culture will never become irrelevant or subservient." Canonici [op.cit.:192]

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