

Midlands State
Established 2000 **University**



FACULTY OF ARTS
DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

***AN ASSESSMENT OF THE ROLE OF THE NDEBELE IDEOLOGICAL
FRAMEWORK IN PROMOTING THE PHILOSOPHY OF UBUNTU.***

By

CRISPEN MOYO

Student Registration Number : R141227M

SUPERVISOR: MR G. T. NCUBE

**Being submitted in Partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Bachelor of
Arts Degree in History and International Studies at Midlands State
University.**

October 2017

APPROVAL FORM

The undersigned certify that they have supervised the student **CRISPEN MOYO** dissertation entitled: **An Assessment of the Role of the Ndebele ideological Framework in Promoting the Philosophy of Ubuntu**. Submitted in Partial fulfillment of the requirements of the Bachelor of Arts in History and International Studies Honors Degree at Midlands State University.

.....

.....

SUPERVISOR

DATE

.....

.....

CHAIRPERSON

DATE

.....

.....

EXTERNAL EXAMINER

DATE

DECLARATION

I Crispen Moyo, Registration Number R141227M do hereby declare that this entire research is a product of my own work. It is being submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for Honors Degree in History and International Studies, in the Faculty of Arts at Midlands State University.

.....

...../...../.....

Crispen Moyo

Date

DEDICATIONS

This work is dedicated to my mother Veronica Babili Ndlovu and my family. Love you all.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Firstly I thank my supervisor Mr G. T. Ncube for his supervision and dedication throughout the whole project study. Special thanks also goes to my mother who had confidence in me and supported me throughout my academic years. I also thank my family for their support during my study. My gratitude also goes to the entire department of History for the assistance throughout the whole academic journey. My thanks and gratitude also goes to John Gasela, Mr. Aleck Gumede, Mr. Phathisa Nyathi, Mrs. Mlangeni-Vundla, Mrs. Patricia Tshabalala, Mrs. Mbambo for their assistance in this study. I would also like to thank my colleagues and friends, Bonani Masola, Josiah N Magwera, Timothy Dube, Nyasha Zanamwe, Nomthandazo Ndlovu, Yolanda Dingana, and all who worked hard to help me throughout the study.

ACRONYMS

AIHC	Amagugu International Heritage Centre
CMP	Common Moral Position
IKS	Indigenous Knowledge System
NACZ	National Arts Council of Zimbabwe
ORAP	Organization of Rural Association for Progress
ZIMSEC	Zimbabwe School Examination Council

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Amalobolo/lobola- Bride prize.

Amalungelo abantu- Rights, entitlement and claims of the people

Embuyisweni- At propitiation ceremony.

Ibhetshu- buttock cover which is made of animal skin and which is a form of traditional dressing in the Ndebele, Zulu and other African cultures.

Ilanga lokuzila- A day of self-denial or self-discipline involving the withholding of physical pleasure in the community.

Ingwini- it is similar to intsoro and is also played using small stones.

Intsoro-type of stone game.

Ilima- A comprehensive agricultural support programe.

Imbila- Dassie

Imlisi- it is similar to *ibhetshu*. This is worn by women.

Inkomo yamadlozi- Ancestral/spiritual cow.

Injuzi- Mermaid(s)

Isibhaca- It is a men competitive team dance.

Isihlabo- pneumonia

Isitshikitsha- A form of Ndebele traditional dance which was mainly done by women.

Isitshingo- A form of Ndebele traditional dance which was mainly done by men.

Iwule/ihexe- Prostitute

Kalabuntu- He/she has no humanness.

Tsika- Customs

Ubuntu- it is humanness

Umvundla- Hare.

Unteletsha- Rock rabbit.

Ukwethesa inkanda- strengthening children's skull.

Umbuyiso- Propitiation.

Ukuthethela- Traditional supplication ceremony.

Ukusisa- borrowing someone a cow or cattle so that they can get milk and plough the fields but they are not allowed to kill the cow.

Usesikhathini/usemazibukweni- To be on menstrual periods.

Utshaywe ngumthakathi- pneumonia (literally- He/she was beaten by a witch).

ABSTRACT

The concept of Ubuntu has been long existing in the Ndebele society, Zimbabwe and Africa as a whole. The concept has been existing since the pre-colonial times, yet little has been done to trace the contributions of the ideological frameworks which were used to promote the philosophy of Ubuntu. Hence the research work`s main aim was to assess the role of the Ndebele ideological framework in promoting the philosophy of Ubuntu. Evidence shows that the Ndebele traditional values played a crucial role in promoting Ubuntu within the Ndebele society. These traditional values were easily adopted by any age group without any difficulty in practicing those principles. There was no need for one to learn to read and write in order to have Ubuntu and also to understand these ideological frameworks. The research also indicates the impacts of Christianity on Ndebele traditions, practices and beliefs.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

APPROVAL FORM	i
DECLARATION	ii
DEDICATIONS.....	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iv
ACRONYMS	v
GLOSSARY OF TERMS	vi
ABSTRACT.....	viii
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	ix
INTRODUCTION	1
Statement of the problem	4
Objectives of the study.....	5
Research questions.....	5
Historical background.....	5
Literature review	7
Methodology	9
Chapter breakdown	10
CHAPTER ONE	13
AN ASSESSMENT OF THE ROLE PLAYED BY THE NDEBELE IDEOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK THAT PROMOTED THE PHILOSOPHY OF UBUNTU.....	13
1.0 Introduction	13
1.1 What is Ubuntu?.....	13
1.2 Proverbs that promoted the philosophy of Ubuntu	14
1.3 Games that promoted the philosophy of Ubuntu	15
1.4 Folktales that promoted the philosophy of Ubuntu.....	16
1.5 Songs and dances that promoted the philosophy of Ubuntu.	17
1.6 Food that promoted the philosophy of Ubuntu	18
1.7 Poetry that promoted the philosophy of Ubuntu.	18
1.8 Religious activities that promoted the philosophy of Ubuntu.....	18
1.9 Dressing that promoted the philosophy of Ubuntu	19
1.10 Ndebele customs that promoted the philosophy of Ubuntu	19
1.11 Totems and taboos that promoted the philosophy of Ubuntu	21

1.12 Conclusion.....	23
CHAPTER TWO	26
THE APPLICABILITY OF THE NDEBELE IDEOLOGICAL FRMEWORK THAT PROMOTED THE PHILOSOPHY OF UBUNTU IN CONTEMPORARY NDEBELE SOCIETY	26
2.0 Introduction.....	26
2.1 The applicability of the Ndebele customs in contemporary Ndebele society.....	26
2.2 Applicability of Ndebele proverbs and folktales in contemporary Ndebele society.....	28
2.3 The applicability of Ndebele traditional religion in contemporary Ndebele society	30
2.4 The applicability of Ndebele totems and taboos in contemporary Ndebele society	31
2.5 Music and dance that promote the philosophy of Ubuntu in contemporary Ndebele society	33
2.6 The applicability of poetry that promote the philosophy of Ubuntu in contemporary Ndebele society.	36
2.7 Cultural associations that promote the philosophy of Ubuntu in contemporary Ndebele society.....	37
2.8 Conclusion.....	38
CHAPTER THREE	42
THE IMPACT OF CHRISTIANITY ON NDEBELE TRADITIONS, PRACTICES AND BELIEFS	42
3.0 Introduction.....	42
3.1 The Negative impact of Christianity on Ndebele traditional religion.....	42
3.2 Ndebele culture and the impact of Christianity.....	47
3.3 Christianity on totems and sacred animals.....	49
3.4 Christianity and Ndebele political traditions, practice and beliefs.....	49
3.5 Positive impacts of Christianity on Ndebele traditions, practices and beliefs	50
3.6 Conclusion.....	50
CONCLUSION	54
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	57

INTRODUCTION

The major focus of this research was on the assessment of the role of the Ndebele ideological framework that promoted the philosophy of Ubuntu in the Ndebele society. According to Dolamo, the concept of Ubuntu is as old as humanity itself.¹ During the pre-colonial period the Ndebele had their ways of teaching children and youths the way of life and promoting the philosophy of Ubuntu. Some of those ideological frameworks survived the missionary period and the colonial period and they still exist up until today. This research therefore traced back the role played by the Ndebele ideological framework that promoted the philosophy of Ubuntu from the pre-colonial period, missionary period, colonial and post-colonial period.

It is of no doubt that the Ndebele ideological framework played vital role that promoted the philosophy of Ubuntu. Traditional education had no curriculum, trained teachers or designated learning areas but people learned a lot from the education which came about through the ideological framework of the Ndebele. The Ndebele ideological framework offered education that was to be applied in future for the promotion of Ubuntu within the Ndebele society and also the Ndebele nation as a whole. Education was not for employment like the current European education which was implemented by the colonialists and adopted in the post-colonial period. Thus before the colonial period education was given to anyone at any age for it to be used in the survival of the political, cultural and socio-economic structures in manifesting the molding of power of Ubuntu and not for employment.

From the pre-colonial period in the Ndebele traditional education was not seen as a separate process from life. The Ndebele ideological framework incorporated and transmitted the value of life. Each piece of literature had its role in providing the moral and practical teaching that would

enable the young to take their rightful places in the community. Cheemalakonda states that, there were traditional oral forms of communication which include the use of storytelling, songs, dance, craft making, giving instructions, poetry, legends and myths.² Hence the Ndebele used all those forms of traditional oral narratives to pass on specific cultural history, values and cultural practices, language, family relations and laws. Thus it also played a vital part that promoted the philosophy of Ubuntu among the Ndebele nation.

The Ndebele used poetry, folktales, songs, proverbs which played a vital role that promoted the philosophy of Ubuntu. Traditional religion, totems, dressing, food were also among other important trends that promoted the philosophy of Ubuntu. Cheemalakonda postulates that, the oral tales have been a pillar of indigenous communication in Zimbabwean societies and through it the values and history of legendary tales were communicated to the young.³ The Ndebele used the above indigenous knowledge systems (IKS) to teach the Ndebele cultural values as well as the value of a human being in the society. Hence these IKS played a crucial role that promoted the philosophy of Ubuntu.

Ndebele traditional songs also played an important role that promoted the philosophy of Ubuntu and in the socio-education of children, groups and individuals. Music was mostly accompanied by dance. Monda states that, indigenous music as well as dance contributed greatly to the socio-education, socialization and development of children, individuals as well as groups and contributed to maintaining the psychological health and social concord of Zimbabwean communities.⁴ Hence music and dance were the most potent means of communicating or addressing the fundamental values and structures of socio-cultural and the economic life of indigenous societies as indicated by Monda.⁵ Traditional music and dances therefore played a

vital role in socialization and most importantly in education. That also helped in the preservation of the Ndebele culture and the promotion of the philosophy of Ubuntu.

Folktales contributed greatly to the socio-education of children, groups and individuals within the Ndebele society. The folktales educate (d) people in analytical skills and the appreciation and application of knowledge to life situations. They played a vital role as acquired various skills which are necessary for one to be a useful member in the society. According to Ndlovu, *et al*, there is a wealth of literature that shows the didactic and positive aspects of folktales in the creation of a wholesome individual who strives for the collective good rather than individual, selfish and narcissistic ends.⁶ They also developed the will power and stoicism and self-control. This went in line with developing a person`s character.

The Ndebele traditional religion also contributed largely that promoted the philosophy of Ubuntu. Religion created unity among the Ndebele which was a vital form of creating Ubuntu. It also created a sense of belonging, communism, and dignity among the Ndebele. It also played a crucial role in socio-education in the Ndebele society. Totems created a sense of belonging, respect of the environment which included sacred animals, rivers, mountains and forests hence promoting the philosophy of Ubuntu. This went hand in glove with taboos. In the Ndebele society, it is a taboo for one to eat or kill an animal or tree that carries his/her totem. If one eats such restricted animals and trees he/she is regarded as a person who has no humanness. In relation to the use of totems, taboos were also used in the promotion of Ubuntu.

More so, in the post-colonial period for example, a drama series *Isithembo* was produced and played on televisions. That drama taught the young ones that one should not practice witchcraft and they should also respect their daughter in-laws if they are left at home to look after them.

The technique in that drama was also the use of folktales since it goes against the values of morals of good behavior in the places of work and this played a vital role that promoted the philosophy of Ubuntu among the children.

Ndebele proverbs were also used in the promotion of the philosophy of Ubuntu. According to Pelling, the proverbs like *inhlanhla kayiphindwa kabili* which is translated to fortune never comes twice.⁷ That proverb taught the children that if one gets a fortune, he/she should use it wisely because that might be the only lifetime fortune. Thus proverbs have a key role in the IKS of the Ndebele that promoted the philosophy of Ubuntu.

Statement of the problem

This research highlights the role of the Ndebele ideological framework that promoted the philosophy of Ubuntu. Little has been said about the importance of the roles played by the Ndebele indigenous knowledge systems that promoted the philosophy Ubuntu. When the colonialists arrived in African, they labeled African traditional activities as backward, barbaric and evil.

Most of the Zimbabwean population including the Ndebele now do not realize the importance of traditional customs and education. Thus the role of the IKSs of the Ndebele are now at risk as little is done nowadays to promote cultural activities especially in urban areas. In the urban areas, most of the children do not have a chance to be told folktales by their grandparents and their parents. The games that are played in the urban areas portray European culture and philosophy. The Ndebele IKSs have not been given the required credit by the Europeans in bringing any value to the society. Therefore the Europeans labeled them as an informal education which was backward and was not important that promoted Ubuntu and creating the wellbeing of humans.

Objectives of the study

1. To interrogate the role played by the Ndebele ideological framework that promoted the philosophy of Ubuntu.
2. To assess the applicability of the Ndebele ideological framework in contemporary Ndebele society.
3. To assess the impact of Christianity on Ndebele traditions, practices and beliefs.

Research questions

1. What is the role of the Ndebele ideological framework that promoted the philosophy of Ubuntu?
2. How applicable is the Ndebele ideological framework in contemporary Ndebele society?
3. What is the impact of Christianity on Ndebele traditions, practices and beliefs?

Historical background

Ndebele people had their ways of promoting the philosophy of Ubuntu. Some of these aspects survived the missionary period, the colonial period and they still exist up to date. In order for one to understand the essence of Ubuntu in the Ndebele nation, it is important to give a brief background about the origins of the Ndebele and also how their IKSs managed to survive the missionary and colonial period and the post-colonial period.

Ndlovu-Gatsheni states that, the Ndebele were a formidable nation, with unique institutions of governance, distinct political ideologies, and a worldview that was shaped by their specific historical experiences. The Ndebele nation was a multinational one comprised of Nguni, Sotho, Tswana, Kalanga, Shona, Venda and Tonga ethnic groups.⁸

According to Ajayi, the Ndebele state was founded by Mzilikazi, the son of a ruler of a small Khumalo chiefdom which was under Zwide.⁹ Mzilikazi and his followers left the Zulu State and settled in Ekuphumuleni. Along their way Mzilikazi fought with other groups which include the Sotho, Pedi, Khoisan and the Griqua and incorporated them into the Ndebele people. Ajayi notes that, through wars, Mzilikazi incorporated many Sotho communities into the Ndebele state.¹⁰ They were given the name *Matabele* by the Sotho which mean the men of long shields. Mazarire notes that, this name had been applied to other Nguni speaking people apart from the Ndebele, it therefore meant ‘stranger’ more than anything else.¹¹ In support of Mazarire’s view Rasmussen articulates that *Matabele* is a Sotho word which meant stranger.¹² He further notes that Mzilikazi and his people did not call themselves Matabele or the AmaNdebele until much later in the 19th century. They were known as the Nguni which emphasized their origins and eventually they came to see themselves more than a tribe and they accepted the new name to stress their common identity.¹³ When Mziklikazi crossed the Limpopo River he assimilated the defeated groups particularly the Shona into his group of the Ndebele.

They adopted some of the culture from Zululand and other adopted them along their way to present day Bulawayo. The proverbs such as “*Izandla ziyagezana*” taught the young ones that it is important to help those who help you. This proverb is similar to the biblical quotation which says “Do unto others what you want them to do unto you.” Thus with that proverb, children, groups and the society learnt the importance of doing good to others hence reflecting its importance in the promotion of the philosophy of Ubuntu. Traditional music and dances also contributed much to the development of socio-education, socialization and development of individuals, groups and mostly children and also contributed in maintaining the social concord of the Ndebele communities.

Traditional ways of education such as the use of proverbs, idioms, poetry, games and folktales contributed tremendously in the promotion of the philosophy of Ubuntu within the Ndebele society. There are organizations that are still fighting against the disappearance of these Ndebele ideological frameworks that promoted the philosophy of Ubuntu. These organizations include the National Arts Council of Zimbabwe (NACZ) which have programmes that fight for the preservation and promotion of the Ndebele culture. Ndlovu notes that according to the NACZ Strategic Plan of 2007-2010 the role of NACZ is to promote, regulate and coordinate the development of arts and culture industry for the benefit of Zimbabweans.¹⁴ She further notes that NACZ promises to respect, protect, preserve and promote the local arts and culture, as a unique mix that gives the people of Zimbabwe a national character and identity.¹⁵ Thus the role of NACZ programmes in preserving and promoting the African culture is vital for the promotion of the philosophy of Ubuntu through the use of the Ndebele ideological frameworks.

Amagugu International Heritage Centre (AIHC) is also one of the organizations in the country which has the vision of being the center of excellence in the documentation, preservation and promotion of indigenous cultural heritage. It also has the mission of providing a venue and organizes recreational programmes as well as educational programmes of indigenous heritage. Thus through its vision and mission, AIHC has an important role in the post-colonial period in reflecting and promoting the role of the Ndebele ideological framework that promoted the philosophy of Ubuntu.

Literature review

It became very important in my study to visit other sources so that I could identify what other scholars and researchers have brought to light concerning the Ndebele ideological framework

that promoted the philosophy of Ubuntu and also to identify what they have left out concerning my area of study. Little has been written concerning the role of the Ndebele ideological framework that promoted the philosophy of Ubuntu. Some of the scholars have written about Ubuntu management, the origins and concept of Ubuntu as a philosophy and other Ndebele ideological frameworks in teachings without linking it with the promoting the philosophy of Ubuntu. Monda wrote on Ubuntu and Social Cohesion in Indigenous Music and Dance focusing on the whole of Zimbabwe. Thus because of the lack of acknowledging the role of the Ndebele ideological framework that promoted the philosophy of Ubuntu, it was my wish to focus on acknowledging the importance of the Ndebele IKSs that promoted the philosophy of Ubuntu.

Monda postulates that for indigenous African societies, music and dance are tangible cultural expressions of human values, more and principles of life.¹⁶ He further notes these art forms are important social mechanisms that nature and promote our indigenous cultural transformation, and reflect as well as reaffirm indigenous processes of social and cultural community relationships.¹⁷ Thus his work laid a foundation for my study in the role of music and dance that promoted the philosophy of Ubuntu.

Helgestad notes that, Ubuntu Management is a management style from Southern Africa, which claims to hold the key to management of black Africans.¹⁸ She further notes that it focuses on the potential of black Africans and promotes black African qualities.¹⁹ Thus Helgestad focus on the promotion of African traditional ideas in management at work places which will promote Ubuntu. Thus using Helgestad`s Ubuntu can play a vital role in management of businesses but she did not indicate the concepts that are to be applied at work place that promote Ubuntu. Thus the above view motivated the student to research more on the importance of the Ndebele

ideological framework as it indicated that through Ubuntu one will have discipline and can be able to do business management.

More so, some scholars have written about Ubuntu focusing mostly in South Africa where they believe that is where the philosophy of Ubuntu started. Little has been written concerning the concepts that promote the philosophy of Ubuntu in Zimbabwe. They wrote about the concept of Ubuntu and its promotion without linking it to any specific African or Zimbabwean tribe or individual group. Through Ubuntu people see themselves as related and that they should work together with others as the Ubuntu philosophy preaches the gospel of unity and acknowledgement of each other. In other word Ubuntu is relational and is different from Western philosophy which is of individualism. Thus such gaps which were left by other scholars prompted the researcher to try to fill them through this study.

Mangena also propounds that at a very early stage, boys are taught to head cattle as a group so as to foster the idea of group or community thus Common Moral Position CMP is imprinted in their minds at a very tender age and is embedded in their minds until they die.²⁰ Thus linking this view with the Ndebele IKSs that promoted the philosophy of Ubuntu, through *ilima*, the Ndebele demonstrate the spirit of togetherness as a group where they bring their resources together and till the land for free for the one who has no resources. Through the work of Mangena, the student got an eye opener that the Ndebele ideological framework promotes the spirit of togetherness and promotes the philosophy of Ubuntu.

Methodology

Data collection of this study was done through primary, secondary, internet and unpublished sources. Collection of primary data was through face to face interviews, which were done with

the elders and the youth of the communities. Interviews were important in the study as they gave an opportunity to ask other questions which may not be indicated in the questioners. They also helped because the respondents also got full details about the importance and objectives of the study.

The use of secondary data collection also helped in cementing the research. Through the use of textbooks, journals articles, newspapers among others, the researcher got more information concerning the philosophy of Ubuntu and the traditional forms of education. With the information from primary, secondary, internet and unpublished sources the research was done much easier and well accomplished.

Chapter breakdown

This research has several chapters which include the introductory chapter. This chapter is made up of the following: introduction, statement of the problem, objectives, research questions, historical background, literature review, methodology and chapter breakdown. Chapter one looks at an assessment of the role of the Ndebele ideological framework that promoted the philosophy of Ubuntu. It looks at the role played by the Ndebele IKSs that promoted the philosophy of Ubuntu. Chapter two focuses on the applicability of the Ndebele ideological framework that promoted the philosophy of Ubuntu in the contemporary Ndebele society. This chapter indicates how applicable is the use of IKSs that promoted the philosophy of Ubuntu in the contemporary Ndebele society. Chapter three then focuses on the impact of Christianity on the Ndebele traditions, practices and beliefs. This chapter looks at both the negative and negative impacts of Christianity on Ndebele traditions, practices and beliefs. After all these chapters there is the conclusion of the study.

ENDNOTES

¹ R. Dolamo, *Botho/Ubuntu: The Heart Of African Ethics*, 1, www.scriptura.journals.ac.za

² R.Cheemalakonda, "Use Of Folk Arts In Mass Communication", available on www.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:240464/FULLTEXT02.pdfFeminist, accessed on 5 May 2017

³ *Ibid*

⁴ T. Monda, "Ubuntu and social cohesion in indigenous music and dance", *The Patriot*, 23-30 March 2017, 20

⁵ *Ibid*, 20

⁶ S. Ndlovu, *et al*, "Zimbabwean Politics and Ndebele Folktales: Machiavellian Parallels" *International Journal of Asian Social Science*, 95, available on www.aessweb.com accessed on 09 April 2017

⁷ J.N. Pelling, *A Practical Ndebele Dictionary*, Harare, Longman, 1994, 151

⁸ S. J. Ndlovu-Gtasheni, *Hegemony, Memory and Historiography*, Rozenberg Publishers, 2009, available on rozenbergquarterly.com, accessed on 09 April 2017

⁹ Ajayi, *General History of Africa. Vi, Africa in The Nineteenth Century Until 1880s*, (bridge edition), James Curry, California, 1998, 47

¹⁰ *Ibid*, 47

¹¹ G. C. Mazarire, "Who are the Ndebele and the Kalanga in Zimbabwe?", Paper Prepared for Konrad Adenauer Foundation Project on Ethnicity in Zimbabwe, 2003, 3 retrieved from ir.uz.ac.zw accessed on 09 April 2017

¹² K. Rasmussen, *The Migrant Kingdom: Mzilikazi and the Ndebele South of the Limpopo*, London, Rex Colling Ltd, 1978, 161

¹³ Ibid. 162

¹⁴ S. Ndlovu, undergraduate Dissertation: “The Role played by National Arts Council of Zimbabwe (NACZ) programmes in the preservation and promotion of the Ndebele Culture”, 2010, 20

¹⁵ *Ibid*, 20

¹⁶ T. Monda, “Ubuntu and Social Cohesion in Indigenous Music and Dance”, *The Patriot*, 24-30 March 2017, 20

¹⁷ *Ibid*, 20

¹⁸ A. H. Helgestad, *Ubuntu Management: Scrutinizing Black and White Stereotypes in Contemporary South African Management Discourse*, available on studenttheses.cbs.dk, accessed on 24 April 2017

¹⁹ *Ibid*,

²⁰ F. Mangena, Ph.D Thesis on “African Ethics through Ubuntu: A Postmodern Exposition Department of Religious Studies, Classics and Philosophy”, University of Zimbabwe, *Africology: The Journal of Pan African Studies*, vol.9 (2), April 2016, 66-69

CHAPTER ONE

AN ASSESSMENT OF THE ROLE PLAYED BY THE NDEBELE IDEOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK THAT PROMOTED THE PHILOSOPHY OF UBUNTU.

1.0 Introduction

It is recognized that the traditional systems of Afrika's indigenous peoples have played a pivotal role in their maintenance.¹ This chapter will look at the role played by the Ndebele ideological frame that promoted the philosophy of Ubuntu in the Ndebele society. The chapter will also highlight different definitions of Ubuntu.

1.1 What is Ubuntu?

Various definitions have been brought forward to indicate what is meant by Ubuntu. Ubuntu is a humanist or ethic philosophy which mainly focuses on people's allegiances and relations with each other.² The word Ubuntu originates from the Bantu languages of Southern Africa and it is seen as a classical African concept. In 2008, Archbishop Desmond Tutu stated that Ubuntu speaks particularly about the fact that you cannot exist as a human being in isolation. It speaks about our interconnectedness. You cannot be human all by yourself, and when you have this quality- Ubuntu- you are known for your generosity.³

In Shona it is called *hunhu*. Shutte also says that to some, Botho/Ubuntu means humanity while Broodryk says it means humanness.⁴ Shutte elaborates his definition by saying the concept of Ubuntu embodies an understanding of what it is to be human and what is necessary for human beings to grow and find fulfilment. It is an ethical concept and expresses a vision of what is valuable and worthwhile in life.⁵ The vision of the concept of Ubuntu has its history fixed in the African history and for most of the Ndebele it is the center of culture. Broodryk also notes that

Ubuntu is the ideal of being human, derived from the worldwide view based on the guiding principle of *umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu* (I am a person through other persons).⁶

Dalomo states that Ubuntu means humanness seem to be more appropriate as it refers to the inner core of an individual.⁷ Thus by the argument of Dalomo, humanness deals with the soul of the person. He further states that Ubuntu is an integral part of African ethics that is stepped in issues of liberation, development, identity etc. It has to do with person`s integrity and dignity.⁸ Ubuntu has behavioral signs which include politeness, helpfulness, forgiveness and compassion circumlocution and civility. In other words, Ubuntu embraces etiquette, thus how to address elders and table manners, paying attention to others despite age differences, as well as prudential behavior. Tshabalala stated that Ubuntu requires four principles which are respect, listening, understanding and patience.⁹ Once you respect it becomes easy to listen, understand, to be patient. Ubuntu also involves hard work, wisdom, humility and godliness. Pearce postulates that good child is expected to know the rules, customs and principles but not to show the attributes of a morally autonomous person *-hunhu-* until around the age of puberty.¹⁰

1.2 Proverbs that promoted the philosophy of Ubuntu

Proverbs played vital role that promoted the philosophy of Ubuntu. Tshabalala stated that for one to have Ubuntu, it should start at home from childhood. She used the proverb *isigogo sigoqwa sisemanzi*¹¹ meaning a child is taught the principles of life while still young. If children are not given warnings and rightful guidance in life the child will not have Ubuntu as he/she grows up. Gasela used a proverb *umthwentwe uhlaba usamila*.¹² This means that for a person to understand the principles of life, he/she must be taught while still young because once he/she is old it will be difficult to capture these important principles. The proverbs *izandla ziyagezana* (help those who

help you or do unto others what you want them to do unto you), encourage unity amongst the society as people will always assist each other in times of need. Thus proverbs played a crucial role that promoted the philosophy of Ubuntu in the Ndebele society.

Proverbs also gave warnings to children and the society. A proverb which says *isala kushelwa sibona ngomopho* (meaning if you do not listen when you are warned you will get into trouble one day). This proverb plays a very significant role in the promotion of the philosophy of Ubuntu in the Ndebele society. *Hamba juba bazakucutha phambili* is another proverb which gives warning to those who do not want to listen. It gave and continues to give warnings to the people who do not listen when they are given warning or corrected. Other proverbs which include *isisu somhambi asinganani singangophonjwana lwembuzi* (the travelers stomach is as big as the horn of a goat).¹³ encouraged the Ndebele to accommodate strangers as they will be strangers to other places as well. It encourages people to be helpful to strangers and give them food because the stranger is not staying but passing. That proverb promotes the philosophy of Ubuntu as it teaches people to be kind and accommodative to everyone and also to be united.

1.3 Games that promoted the philosophy of Ubuntu

Games also contributed much in the promotion of the philosophy of Ubuntu in the Ndebele society. They created unity amongst the children as it gave the time to get to know each other. According to Mlangeni-Vundla games created unity amongst the children and made them to get to know each other.¹⁴ Some games required children to play as families, husband and wife. In those kind of games children were learning on how to be good fathers and mothers and not to be violent future parents. Thus games had a very important role that promoted the philosophy of Ubuntu in the Ndebele society.

1.4 Folktales that promoted the philosophy of Ubuntu.

Folktales were also another oral form of conveying message and promoted the philosophy of Ubuntu in the Ndebele society. They were either giving warnings, encouragements, promoted unity among other aspect of Ubuntu. Mlangeni-Vundla stated that folktales teaches people to speak their language correctly and they also highlighted characteristics of a person without Ubuntu.¹⁵ She gave an example of the character of a hare in most of the folktales where it appeared as a mischievous character who was not to be trusted. In other folktale he appeared to be good character where he could help and save lives. Gasela and Mbambo gave an example of *umvundla lonteletsha* (hare and a rock rabbit) where they were playing and the hare said lets cook each other.¹⁶ The hare was the first to be cooked. As the water was getting warm he cried and said take me out. Rock rabbit entered as the water was getting hotter the hare refused to remove the rock rabbit up until it was well cooked and was eaten by the hare. From that folktale, children were taught to be careful on who they play with in life as other people who claim to be good friends can turn out to be monsters. That therefore promoted the philosophy of Ubuntu.

There are many folktales which talk about the hare as bad or good character. Gasela and Mbambo also gave an example with another folktale about a hare, baboon and a lion.¹⁷ The baboon came across a lion which was stuck in the rocks. He then decided to help the lion. After removing the lion from the trap, it then wanted to eat the baboon. As the baboon was bagging for his life, the hare appeared and asked what was happening and the baboon explained. The hare then said to the lion, “can you go back to the rocks and see how you got stuck” and the lion went back to the rocks and they pushed the rock and the lion was stuck again. The hare then said “we will leave you like this now because if we help you will eat us” and they left. The folktale teaches people learn that one should not bite the hand that feeds or helps him. It also taught that

those whom we think are bad people in life can also be life savers as indicated through the character of the hare. Thus through that folktale the principle of Ubuntu was promoted through a story that was thought to be of entertainment but it was a way of educating others about life encounters. Mlangeni-Vundla also stated that folktales teaches people that laziness is dangerous and not acceptable in the society.¹⁸ She gave a folktale about *imbila* which failed to get a tail because of laziness to go and collect its tail. Thus folktale teaches people that a person with Ubuntu is also a hard worker.

1.5 Songs and dances that promoted the philosophy of Ubuntu.

In the Ndebele society, songs also had important role that promoted the philosophy of Ubuntu. Songs were used to guide, teach and build a person to be a respectable person in the society. They were also used to praise, showing appreciation, encouragement if someone did well for the community or an individual. For example if the army was going for war, people would sing songs that encouraged soldiers to be brave. When it was a wedding people would sing joyful songs that brought unity amongst the people and dignity to both families and the bride and the groom. Thus songs also played a vital role that promoted the philosophy of Ubuntu.

Dances like songs also showed the mood or situation that they were in. They also showed the character of those who were dancing. Mlangeni-Vundla stated that women would dance *isitshikitsha* while men would dance *isitshingo* when the army was going for war.¹⁹ This was a way of boosting the morality of the army and it also created unity amongst the Ndebele society hence contributing to the promotion of the philosophy of Ubuntu.

1.6 Food that promoted the philosophy of Ubuntu

Food also contributed much that promoted the philosophy of Ubuntu in the Ndebele society. There were food stuffs which were not eaten by children. Others were not eaten by boys or girls or women because it was a taboo. For example, they were not allowed to eat cattle or goat head, liver, large intestines and testicles of a bull, sheep or goat. They were eaten by the elderly. It was believed that if boys ate such kind of food they will be weak members of the society and also weak family man. As for girls and women it was believed that they will make these animals barren or the calves will die still young of even before birth. This played a vital role that promoted the philosophy of Ubuntu in the Ndebele society as it was a way of preparing young boys to be respectable fathers in future.

1.7 Poetry that promoted the philosophy of Ubuntu.

Poetry taught people about their identity and also about their nation as indicted by Tshabalala.²⁰ It also taught people their history so that they may know their identity. Mlangeni-Vundla stated that poetry played a role in building one`s dignity. It also showed the power and significance of a person in the society.²¹ Like songs and dances, poetry was also used to praise the Kings, chiefs as well as family members to show appreciation and create unity in the Ndebele society.

1.8 Religious activities that promoted the philosophy of Ubuntu

Religion also had a significant role that promoted the philosophy of Ubuntu in the Ndebele society. Traditional healers and witch doctors were not allowed to kill or to be in position of herbs that were meant for killing. Those who were found in position of such herbs they were killed through the orders of the king. There were sacred areas or shrines that were of religious activities and there were norms and customs that were to be followed when visiting such areas.

For example iNjelele in Matopo was visited by the elderly for various reason which included rain supplication ceremonies, thanks giving on good harvest. Thus these religious practices promoted the philosophy of Ubuntu because they taught respect to the ancestors.

1.9 Dressing that promoted the philosophy of Ubuntu

In the pre-colonial period, the father would wear *ibhetshu* which showed his status a power in the family and society. Young boys also had theirs which indicated their level and status. Women used to wear *imisisi* which were below the knees. It was a taboo to see the knees of a grown up woman. Young girls who were in puberty stage would wear bras to cover their breasts. A king wore a leopard skin which was a symbol of power. That showed the status and significance of the king. Therefore dressing contributed a lot in the promotion of the philosophy of Ubuntu.

1.10 Ndebele customs that promoted the philosophy of Ubuntu

Ndebele customs also contributed largely that promoted the philosophy of Ubuntu. In the Ndebele society one`s child is everyone`s child. Thus a child is not being educated for the family alone but for the entire society. Samkange and Samkange propound that education is for the society by society. An elder can also physically punish children who behave contrary to the customs and rules.²² Thus a child is expected to see all male adults as his/her father or uncle and elderly females are referred to as mothers or aunties. Thus by these customs the child is raised to have Ubuntu in the society.

Tshabalala stated that the first Ndebele custom that played a pivotal role that promoted the philosophy of Ubuntu was knowing your identity *i.e* the background and where you are coming from. This includes totems of both families of your mother and father.²³ By knowing the totems names, one would understands his or her identity and then the understanding the concept of

Ubuntu. Tshabalala stated that Ubuntu starts to build-up during pregnancy. When a girl or woman was impregnated, the pregnancy will be announced to family of the responsible father so that the child cannot lose his or her identity from the beginning.²⁴ During the time of birth, different trees were used as herbs to protect the child from diseases, bad luck and the evil. Each family had its own tree and herbs that they used to apply on the head of the child. In Ndebele it is called (*ukwethesa inkanda*). All these customary practices had large contributions that promoted the philosophy of Ubuntu in that child and in the Ndebele society. There were also ways of disposing the umbilical cord and it was also done in line with the family totems, values and beliefs. Tshabalala asserted that the navel (umbilical) also determined who the person was. If the umbilical cord was wrongly disposed, it would cause problems for the child which might affect humanness (Ubuntu) of that child.²⁵

There were also other hidden ways of confronting those who are doing mischievous things in the society. Moyo stated that for example if a married man had a girlfriend, unlike these days where girlfriends are called *iwule* (prostitute) in Ndebele or small house in slang language, long back they called them *ihexe*, which was a hidden way of saying girlfriend.²⁶ This was a way of maintaining the status of the person who was a girlfriend rather than to humiliate her. Thus by practicing such hidden ways of confrontation, the philosophy of Ubuntu was promoted as the other person's dignity was still maintained.

When a woman was on periods, it was not said that *usesikhathini* like what is being said nowadays. They used to say *usemazibukweni*. This was a way of showing respect and dignity to women because it is nature to be on periods. Those respecting words were a way of promoting the philosophy of Ubuntu.

There were also traditional ways of welcome a newly wedded bride at home. The bride was not expected to start doing home duties immediately after arriving home but she would wait to be told what to do and how to do it. She was not allowed to eat milk from the cattle which belonged to her in-laws unless if she was given a go-ahead to do so. This promoted Ubuntu to the daughter in-law as she was to show respect the husband's family. Traditionally, the father in-law and the mother in-law must not see the daughter in-law's head. The daughter in-law was expected to wear a hat or a duke every time. Similarly, the son in-laws was not expected to see the mother in-law's head. The daughter in-law was not expected to share the same house with the father in-law when eating. This was the same with the son in-law and the mother in-law. Therefore by these customs, the Ndebele society was teaching children respect and also to maintain the dignity of the in-laws hence it was another form of the Ndebele ideological framework which was used that promoted the philosophy of Ubuntu.

Tshabalala stated that the needy were given cattle or goats (*ukusisa*) to keep so that they can also have milk or they could be given milk everyday if they were not borrowed animals do domesticate. If they had no planting seed, they were given those seeds for farming or a hector in the fields.²⁷ That promoted the spirit of sharing, unity and promoted the philosophy of Ubuntu within the Ndebele society.

1.11 Totems and taboos that promoted the philosophy of Ubuntu

Totems also contributed in the promotion of the philosophy of Ubuntu. Totems helped in shaping the identity of an individual as well as telling the history of an individual. Thus they promoted the philosophy of Ubuntu by creating identity of an individual or group. In the Ndebele culture it was a taboo for one to consume an animal which has his/her totem. For example Ngwenya is not

allowed to eat crocodile meat, Siziba is not allowed to eat fish, Ngulube is not allowed to eat pig. This was because of the belief that if one eats that animal he/she will have misfortunes or bring bad luck to the family. Thus by respecting the totems there was animal preservation and respect for the environment and also respect for the ancestors and the family hence it contributed to the promotion of the philosophy of Ubuntu.

Taboos were also other forms of the Ndebele ideological framework which promoted the philosophy of Ubuntu. It was a taboo for girls and pregnant woman to pass in-between herd of cattle. It is/was believed that if a pregnant woman passed in between herd of cattle she might have complications during pregnancy or during birth and sometimes she might have a miscarriage. Mbambo added that if a woman was on periods she was also not allowed to pass in between head of cattle.²⁸ This therefore played a vital role that promoted Ubuntu in the Ndebele society as it brought respect to other people`s livestock.

Some of the disease were not called by their names as it was a taboo to call them with their names. It was also believed that if they were called according to their names the diseases would spread and become uncontrollable. Moyo and Tshabalala gave an example of *isihlabo* (pneumonia).²⁹ According to Ndebele custom if someone had pneumonia it was said that *utshaywe ngumthakathi*. This was the same with toothache, and measles.

In the Ndebele society sitting on the road was considered as taboo. Children were given warnings by saying *lingahlali endleleni lizamila amathumba* (do not sit on the road because you will develop boils). Mbambo added that others would say *ungahambi nyovane umama wakho uzawela enkezweni* (do not walk backward because you will fall). This was a polite way of warning children that if they sit on the road they might fall in danger whether they will be hit by

cars or anything that travels by the road. This made children fear and respect the roads because of the fear to develop the boils. Thus taboos help to maintain the principle of Ubuntu

In the Ndebele society it is also a taboo for a child to stand while talking to adults. It does not show respect to the adults if a child stood while talking to adults or joining their conversations without the permission of the elderly. Talking to adults while holding your waist or putting hand in the pockets also showed lack of respect to the adults hence it was also regarded as taboo. This instilled respect amongst children and showed the dignity of the elderly hence it also played a significant role in the promotion of the philosophy of Ubuntu.

In the Ndebele society there is also a resting day which is called *ilanga lokuzila*. In other communities it is every Wednesday and others on Thursday. If anyone is seen working in the fields in those days he/she will be punished by paying a certain fine. This is very common in the rural areas. Thus by respecting those day, it also promotes the philosophy of Ubuntu among the people.

1.12 Conclusion

In a nutshell, this chapter addressed the assessment of the role of the Ndebele ideological framework that promoted the philosophy of Ubuntu. The chapter indicated the importance of the proverbs that promoted the philosophy of Ubuntu. It indicated that proverbs played a crucial role in the Ndebele society as they were a medium of communication, educating, giving warnings and complimenting. Same was the role of folktales, poetry, music and dance. Religion also promote the sense of unity, respect and dignity among the Ndebele society. Totems and food also played vital role that promoted the philosophy of Ubuntu among the Ndebele society.

ENDNOTES

¹ A. Shutte, *Ubuntu: An Ethic for a New South Africa*, Cluster publications, Pietermaritzburg, 2001, 2

² *Ibid*, 2

³ J. Broodryk, *Understanding South Africa: the Ubuntu way of Living. Pretoria: Ubuntu School of Philosophy*, 2008, 41, retrieved from www.globalsocialwork.org, accessed on 25 August 2017

⁴ A. Shutte, *Ubuntu: An Ethic for a New South Africa*, Cluster publications, Pietermaritzburg, 2001, 2 and J. Broodryk, *Understanding South Africa: the Ubuntu way of Living. Pretoria: Ubuntu School of Philosophy*, 2008, 41

⁵ Shutte, *Ubuntu: An Ethic for a New South Africa*, Cluster publications, Pietermaritzburg, 2001, 2

⁶ *Ibid*, 2

⁷ R. Dolamo, *Botho/Ubuntu: The Heart Of African Ethics*, www.scriptura.journals.ac.za

⁸ *Ibid*

⁹ Interview with P. Tshabalala, Bulawayo, 23 August 2017

¹⁰ C. Pearce, "Tsika, Hunhu and the Moral Education Of Primary School Children," *African e-journals Projects*, www.digital.lib.msu.edu/africanjournals

¹¹ Interview with P. Tshabalala, Bulawayo, 23 August 2017

¹² Interview with J. Gasela, Bulawayo, 24 August 2017

¹³ *Ibid*

¹⁴ Interview with Mlangeni-Vundla, Bulawayo, 25 August 2017

¹⁵ *Ibid*

¹⁶ Interview with J. Gasela, Bulawayo, 24 August 2017, Interview with Mbambo, Bulawayo, 23 August 2017

¹⁷ *Ibid*

¹⁸ Interview with Mlangeni-Vundla, Bulawayo, 25 August 2017

¹⁹ *Ibid*

²⁰ Interview with P. Tshabalala, Bulawayo, 23 August 2017

²¹ Interview with Mlangeni-Vundla, Bulawayo, 25 August 2017

²² S. Samkange, T. M. Samkange, Hunhuism or Ubuntuism, Graham Publishing, Harare, 72

²³ Interview with P. Tshabalala, Bulawayo, 23 August 2017

²⁴ *Ibid*

²⁵ *Ibid*

²⁶ Interview with Moyo, Bulawayo, 23 August 2017

²⁷ Interview with P. Tshabalala, Bulawayo, 23 August 2017

²⁸ Interview with Mbambo, Bulawayo, 23 August 2017

²⁹ Interview with Moyo, Bulawayo, 23 August 2017 and Interview with P. Tshabalala, Bulawayo, 23 August 2017

CHAPTER TWO

THE APPLICABILITY OF THE NDEBELE IDEOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK THAT PROMOTE THE PHILOSOPHY OF UBUNTU IN CONTEMPORARY NDEBELE SOCIETY

2.0 Introduction

The Ndebele ideological framework continues to play a crucial role in promoting the philosophy of Ubuntu in contemporary Ndebele society. At independence in 1980 Zimbabwe introduced scientific socialism as a guiding ideology for the new government in place of the colonial capitalist ideology generally viewed as discriminating against the indigenous population in almost all aspects of social life. To avoid retributions, a number of policy changes were made in most areas including education.¹ Connell articulates that, in their post-colonial era, a number of African states have tried to incorporate indigenous knowledges from their societies as part of educational policy reforms to counter what has been regarded as colonial pro-western ideology.² Sigauke notes that in Southern Africa post-colonial governments have attempted to reform education policies with a view towards including African indigenous knowledges or philosophies considered relevant to their societies in contrast to colonial policies viewed as hegemonic and oppressive.³ It is important to note that some of the practices were included in formal education where as some are still done the traditional way and they are still applicable in the contemporary Ndebele society. This chapter will therefore look at the applicability of the Ndebele ideological framework that promote the philosophy of Ubuntu in contemporary Ndebele society.

2.1 The applicability of the Ndebele customs in contemporary Ndebele society

The Ndebele customs still have a tremendous role that promoted the philosophy of Ubuntu in the contemporary Ndebele society. After the attainment of independence in 1980, the Ndebele customs continued to be recognized more as they were incorporated in the education system of

the country. In the pre-colonial and the colonial period, children were taught that every adult is parent, uncle, aunt, brother, sister and so on. The trend is still applicable in the contemporary Ndebele society. Kay states that being born in the village means that you are a child of the village community, you are related to every member of the group.⁴ Therefore, every community members or villagers are also responsible for the up-bringing of the child in terms of who he/she becomes in the society as well as human qualities expected from the child which will represent not only the family but the whole society. Sigauke propounds that, Ubuntu is about who you are because you belong to the community.⁵ If a child lacks Ubuntu, he/she is a disgrace to the family, community. Sigauke says that it would also be important in determining your future social relations, for instance in marital matters, as people would be keen to know your status in terms of Hunhu/Ubuntu.⁶ Thus through such practices, the Ndebele ideological framework is still applicable in the contemporary Ndebele society. Sigauke highlights that since the majority of teachers would teach in rural communities during the colonial period, it was and is still expected that all teachers are familiar with and respect Ubuntu/Hunhu principles in terms of how they relate to students, to teach others as teachers and to their communities.⁷ Therefore with the above view, it is clear that the Ndebele ideological framework is still applicable in the contemporary Ndebele society.

In African societies the bridegroom pays bride price to the bride`s family. In the Ndebele society, the payment is known as *amalobolo*. Bride price payment is one of the Ndebele customs that is still applicable in the contemporary Ndebele society. It is one of the features which is still used to promote the philosophy of Ubuntu. Bourdillon asserts that the payment of *lobola* is made in order to legalize the marriage. Any marriage that does not involve the payment of bride price

looks like casual sex or prostitution.⁸ Thus payment of *lobola* by the bridegroom shows that he has Ubuntu and it also creates unity and dignity to the families involved.

2.2 Applicability of Ndebele proverbs and folktales in contemporary Ndebele society

Proverbs are still a necessary form of indigenous knowledge which is still used to address some of the moral ethical challenges which are faced by the modern Ndebele society. They occupy a vital space in finding possible solution since they provide a platform for problem solving, raising awareness and moral guidance in an entertaining and invigorating manner.⁹ Sibanda propounds that, proverbs serve as a warning in human activities or relations. They criticize and praise, advice and teach.¹⁰ In the Ndebele society, proverbs cover almost every aspect of human life and their relations. The government has also made an effort of including proverbs in the school curriculums as a way of promoting traditional education. There are set books which are for the A` levels and O` levels. Therefore in the contemporary Ndebele society, these proverbs are applicable and they continue to promote the philosophy of Ubuntu.

The significance of the proverbs such as *indlela ibuzwa kwabaphambile/innyathi ibuzwa kwabaphambili* continues to have a crucial role that promoted the philosophy of Ubuntu. The proverb encourages people to ask if they do not know rather than to pretend as if you know because one might be doing something which is unacceptable in the society. That proverb is still applicable in the contemporary Ndebele society as it continues to give warnings to the people. The other Ndebele proverb which is still applicable in the contemporary Ndebele society is *ihloka liyakhohlwa kodwa isihlahla asikhohlwa* (an axe forgets but the tree doesn't forget) is used to discourage ill-treatment of a fellow human being by another. It also reveals the empathy the Ndebele people have towards the environment including trees¹⁰ because Ubuntu does not

only imply on human being but also the environment. The proverb *inkomo kayisengwa ngokwehlisa* (Do not continuously milk a cow until there is nothing to milk) promotes the philosophy of Ubuntu because it despises or discourages people to milk the cow until there is nothing left for the calf because the calf survives on that milk. This also indicates that Ubuntu also extends to animals not only to human beings. Therefore this show that proverbs are still applicable in the contemporary Ndebele society.

Proverbs still provide a rich prompt of the goal for peace and for events whose inference can give rise to peaceful mutual interaction and harmony in the world. The wisdom of the Ndebele still lies in their proverbs as they continue to play a crucial role in peacebuilding initiatives hence promoting the principle of Ubuntu. The proverb which says *Akugoba lingeqondiswe* (there is no problem that cannot be resolved) indicates that people who have been wrong to each other, if they resolve their differences peacefully, they can do better to improve their relations. Hence the proverb is still applicable in the contemporary Ndebele society. Sibanda says the Ndebele have posed that, *Uthango lwevila ngameva* (failure opts for violence rather than peace).¹² *Induku kayakhi muzi* (war does not build a nation)¹³ highlights violence does not only kill and injure people but it also damages individuals including the development of children and the society as a whole. Thus in the contemporary Ndebele society it is believed that violence does not promote peace but negotiations can bring peace in the society hence promoting Ubuntu in the society.

Like the proverbs, folktales also continue to play a pivotal role that promoted the philosophy of Ubuntu in contemporary Ndebele society. Folktales mostly consist of nearly all aspect which are used by the Ndebele to teach children, individuals and the community on the ways of life. Folktales bring hope to the society and they continue to be used as forms of preserving the

Ndebele culture and also as a way of conveying messages to the people. Shoniwa posits that, folktales are also told to educate children into cultural values of the society as well as give them motivation and sense of well-being. In stories where small animals seem to beat the odds and overcome bigger ones both physically and mentally, the children learn the important lesson that anybody is able to achieve great things in the society no matter how small, different or experienced they may be.¹⁴

According to Shoniwa, the stories help in showing how society views itself and also conveys their notions of justice, rights and social obligations of its citizens.¹⁵ Folktales show that being selfish, greedy and lazy can lead to thieving, death and other consequences that may be harmful to a human being. That is indicated in the folktale which talks about *imbila* failing to get its tail because of laziness and also through the character of a rabbit which refused to dig a well and later went to steal and he was caught. Shoniwa notes that, animal imagery makes it possible for children and other people to easily understand the relevance of the story being told due to the simplified character of the animal.¹⁶ In making fun through folktales makes the message to be easily understood by children, animals are still used to portray human behaviors and their attitudes and character.

2.3 The applicability of Ndebele traditional religion in contemporary Ndebele society

Tradition religious ceremonies continue to play part in the promotion of Ubuntu. Though Christianity is dominant religion in the country, people also respect their religion and ancestors. They still respect some of the religious activities that are said to be taboos, or activities that may anger the ancestors. Ancestral spirits are still worshiped mostly in the rural areas. Chibvongodze is of the view that, *inkomo yamadlozi* (ancestral/spiritual cow) is used to communicate with the

spirits of the dead when conducting the socio-cultural ceremony of *ukuthethela* (propitiation).¹⁷ De-Heusch says, in this ceremony the spiritual cow is elevated to the level of a human being and it is entrusted with the duty of relaying messages from the living to the dead.¹⁸ Therefore, the interconnectedness of humans and animals in the spiritual sense reflects the sense of Ubuntu. Thus traditional religion is applicable in the promotion of the philosophy of Ubuntu. Chibvongodze says that the same religious co-existence humans have with the animals is also seen in the way their spirituality is exercised through plants, mountains, hills and water bodies.¹⁹ Thus the co-existence promotes Ubuntu within the Ndebele society.

The Ndebele traditional religion believes that spirits live in some parts of the rivers as well as sacred pools still exist and applicable in the contemporary Ndebele society. These areas have had limited or less interference with people. In the Ndebele traditional religion, there are some rivers which are inhabited by mermaids (*injuzi*) that captures people that draw near its inhabitants. According to Shoko, (*Njuzu* in Shona) grants its captive healing powers that may enrich the spiritual life of the community.²⁰ Therefore, respect for the sacred rivers and pools also contributes to the promotion of Ubuntu in contemporary Ndebele society.

2.4 The applicability of Ndebele totems and taboos in contemporary Ndebele society

Shoko articulates that, in the African context, clan names sometimes referred to as totems represent the history and origins of a clan.²¹ Totems in the Ndebele society continue to be used to inform one`s identity. Opland propounds that clan names can play an essential role in African religion, as they are used to conjure and communicate with the spirits of the dead during rituals.²² It is still common among the Ndebele to name their totems after animals. That custom still applicable in contemporary Ndebele society as it is the duty of the clan to protect that animal

from any harm thus protecting it from extinction. It is still believed that if one consumes his/her totem may result in loss of teeth and also brings bad luck and misfortunes. Chibvongodze notes that the identification of clans and totems through wild animals allow humans to convey some degree of respect to the animals.²³ Galaty supports Chibvongodze by saying the naming of clans or animals after animals permits humans to transmit their humanness and personhood to animals, while animals bring the identity of the African into being.²⁴ Therefore the respect of animals that bear one`s totem indicates that one has Ubuntu and respect of his/her totem and ancestors.

In the contemporary Ndebele society, segment taboos continue to play a vital role in the promotion of the philosophy of Ubuntu. These taboos prohibit the consumption as well as the utilization of some species for a period of time by people of different sexes as well as gender and age. These taboos are a cultural values or norms as well as social values that still exist or prevail in the Ndebele society. For instance in the Ndebele society, pregnant woman are prohibited from eating meat that came from a cow which died during birth as it is believed that she will also have complications when giving birth. Thus their existence to the present day indicates that the taboos are still applicable in the promotion of the philosophy of Ubuntu in the contemporary Ndebele society.

The temporal taboos also continue to play a vital role in the contemporary Ndebele society that promoted the philosophy of Ubuntu. These permit people to have access to natural resources at a given time, day or month. In some rural areas in Matabeleland, there is a specific day to which people are prohibited to do field work or go for hunting. In Bulawayo, Filabusi, Tsholotsho and Nkayi, Wednesday is the day that people should not do any farming activities. Other areas

recognize Thursday. These practices are still applicable in the contemporary Ndebele society hence they promote the philosophy of Ubuntu.

Life and specific-species taboos prohibit the use or hunting of species which are at a depleting or vulnerable stage. For example the hunting or killing of a python is restricted because it is regarded as a sacred specie which has something to do with the ancestral spirits. Therefore pythons are respected and protected in the Ndebele society which indicates that taboos are still applicable in the contemporary Ndebele society.

Habitant taboos are also applicable in the contemporary Ndebele society as they mainly focus on the respect of sacred mountains like iNjelele in Matopo and Shamba in Filabusi as well as rivers and pools that are inhabited by mermaids. Colding and Folke subscribe that taboos are often placed on sacred rivers, pools, forest and mountains in which access to the natural environments by the ordinary community members is barred.²⁵ Tshabalala also supported that view by saying young people are not allowed to go to Njelele except if that person has a special calling to visit the site.²⁶ Therefore with the above views the Ndebele society still apply the habitant taboos as a way of promoting the philosophy of Ubuntu.

2.5 Music and dance that promote the philosophy of Ubuntu in contemporary Ndebele society

Social relations and Ubuntu continue to be shaped through music. Music form part of the knowledge which existed in the history of the Ndebele over time and across generations. Music and dance are tangible cultural expressions of human values, mores and principles of life. The communalistic interactive, communicative nature of music and dance creates a high degree of social cohesion.²⁷ Magaisa says that a more subtle and probably more crucial role of music is

communication of messages within families and society. The creators of music reflect the mood and thinking of individuals or sections of society.²⁸ In the contemporary Ndebele society music is still used as medium of communication. Therefore, music and dance in the Ndebele society are one of the most effective ways of expressing the values and important structures of socio-cultural life of the Ndebele. The new curriculum in the education sector also encourages the teaching of culture and heritage as a way of promoting the philosophy of Ubuntu not only in the Ndebele society but to the nation as a whole. Thus by the government effort to promote the teaching of culture and heritage, it is clear that music is applicable that promoted the philosophy of Ubuntu in the contemporary Ndebele society.

In relation to the above, Magaisa further indicates that, music becomes a way of expressing the views and emotions. In an environment where the media is tightly controlled and alternative voices are unwelcome, where the democratic space of parliament, judiciary and the executive is circumscribed, music becomes the space through which the society, through individual authors can express itself.²⁹ The traditional music of the Ndebele reveals the religious beliefs, communication patterns, the moods of expression as well as form of entertainment. Therefore, music remains applicable in the contemporary Ndebele society that promoted the philosophy of Ubuntu.

Cultural functions in the Ndebele society has always used music as way of communication with their ancestors. Ancestral spirits play a vital role in the Ndebele society that promoted the philosophy of Ubuntu. Funerals, propitiation ceremonies and other religious ceremonies, music accompanied with dances are performed as part of healing process. Therefore music and dances play a vital role in educating the present as well as future generations about the cultural history

of the Ndebele. Magaisa notes that these songs embody strong message about life and culture of the people.³⁰

Music is mostly accompanied by dances. In the Ndebele society, traditional dances are usually performed for three purposes. These include ceremonial, religious as well as social purposes. Mahanda asserts that, traditional dances are used to teach social values, recite history, encourage people to work, aid in funeral proceedings, celebrate festivals, praise or criticize members of the community and more importantly, help communities connect with the ancestors.³¹ Thus dances also continue to be applicable in the contemporary Ndebele society that promoted the philosophy of Ubuntu as they are crucial social mechanisms that educate or train and popularize the Ndebele ideological framework and its transformation hence reaffirming the cultural relationships of the communities. Hence it also promotes agglutinative socio-cultural forces that embody collaboration and unity, bond and strengthens the community and exemplifies the central ideology of Ubuntu.³²

More so, music and dance are devices which are used in the Ndebele society for socio-spiritual reconciliation as well as for transformation and also they are used to improve unity and productivity of the community. Monda says, in their pre and post-colonial forms, Zimbabwean music and dance embrace and reflect cultural and educative values of discipline, freedom of expression creative and spontaneous improvising as well as socio-psychological empowerment, physical, emotional and mental catharsis.³³ Therefore music and dance continues to play a vital role as a way of promoting Ubuntu through social unity and the preservation of the Ndebele culture and the dignity of the Ndebele society.

2.6 The applicability of poetry that promote the philosophy of Ubuntu in contemporary Ndebele society.

Like music, poetry also part as the voice of the community if the people are oppressed or feel that they are not treated fairly. They also teach people about the history of not only the Ndebele but also of the country hence poetry is still applicable that promoted the Ndebele ideological framework in contemporary Ndebele society. Some poems which are used in the contemporary Ndebele society do not only talk about the colonial exploitation but others talk of love, death, Africa as a continent, the heroes of the Ndebele nation and those of the liberation struggle, weather among others. Khiyaza wrote a poem talking about the power of love.³⁴ He wrote that if someone is in love he can do anything because love is powerful. He can walk in the darkness and valleys without fear of lions and the darkness because the person will be controlled by love. He also stated that love makes people blind to the extent of not listening to the advice from his family members. Therefore such poems indicate that love is powerful and that if someone is in love he/she can do anything. Thus it also teaches people that one cannot choose to love someone but the heart chooses hence it plays an important role that promoted Ubuntu in contemporary Ndebele society.

Mahlangu wrote poem about death.³⁵ In his poem, he is criticizing death that it is unusual to everyone even if we know that we will die. He also indicates that it does not have manners it take all age groups, the learned, the rich and poor. Thus such poems encourage people to do good while they are still alive and also to know that everyone will die hence we have to stay prepared. Therefore, such poems play a crucial role in the contemporary Ndebele society that promoted Ubuntu.

2.7 Cultural associations that promote the philosophy of Ubuntu in contemporary Ndebele society

Cultural associations are also taking part that promoted the applicability of the Ndebele ideological framework in contemporary Ndebele society. Cultural associations such as Amakhosi Theatre Production also known as Amakhosi Academy of Performing Arts, Zenzele Trust under Organization of Rural Association for Progress (ORAP), Amagugu International Heritage Trust among others are playing a crucial role that promoted the applicability of the Ndebele ideological framework in contemporary Ndebele society.

Amakhosi theatre is one of the Cultural associations that plays a vital role that promoted the philosophy of Ubuntu. It mainly produces dramas that speak much on the protection of the Ndebele culture and heritage. The dramas such as *Isithembo* (Polygamy) which had MaMbatha as a cruel mother-in-law and a witch ending up getting mental illness because of witchcraft. Her character taught people to be good on each other and also to do away with witchcraft as it has consequences which may lead to death or illness to the one who practices witchcraft. Thus through her character people are taught to live harmoniously with each other which is one of the characteristics of Ubuntu. The drama also teaches people to respect their brother's wives. This was indicated when Thulani was engaged in a relationship with his brother's wife. That created tensions between family members when Thulani impregnated his brother's wife. This showed that both Thulani and the daughter-in-law had no humanness (Ubuntu) which led them to have an affair when they were family members. Thus the dramas play a crucial role that promoted the applicability of the Ndebele ideological framework in contemporary Ndebele society and a nation as a whole.

Zenzele under ORAP is also contributing to the applicability of the Ndebele ideological framework in contemporary Ndebele society. The organization encourages people in the rural areas to do practical works which mostly focuses on traditional crafts such as pottery, basket making, weaving, and black smith and so on. These products are then sold locally during trade fairs and also exported. Thus such project revive the Ndebele culture and also teaches people and mostly children about the history of the Ndebele. It also creates unity among the people in the communities

Amagugu International Heritage Trust is also playing a similar role with Zenzele Trust. Amagugu also has projects basket making, weaving, and pottery among others. It also does traditional dance and exhibitions on the Ndebele culture which involves dramas, poetry music. Therefore, the organization plays a crucial role that promoted the philosophy of Ubuntu in contemporary Ndebele society as it promotes IKSs.

2.8 Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter highlighted the applicability of the Ndebele ideological framework in contemporary Ndebele society. It also indicated the importance of the Ndebele ideological framework in contemporary Ndebele society as the cultural practices of the Ndebele continue to play a crucial role that promoted the philosophy of Ubuntu. It assessed the role played by folktales, proverbs, music, dance, customs, poetry and totems and their applicability in the contemporary Ndebele society.

ENDNOTES

¹ A. T. Sigauke, “Ubuntu/Hunhu in Post-colonial Education Policies In Southern Africa: A Response To Connell’s Southern Theory and the Role of Indigenous African Knowledge in the Social Science”, *Post-colonial Directions in Education* vol 5(1), 40

² R. Connell, *Southern Theory: The Global Dynamics of Knowledge in Social Science*, Crown Nest, Allen and Unwin

³ Sigauke, “Ubuntu/Hunhu in Post-colonial Education Policies In Southern Africa: A Response To Connell’s Southern Theory and the Role of Indigenous African Knowledge in the Social Science”, 28

⁴ G. Kay, *Rhodesia: A human Geography*, London, University of London Press Ltd, 23

⁵ Sigauke, “Ubuntu/Hunhu in Post-colonial Education Policies In Southern Africa: A Response To Connell’s Southern Theory and the Role of Indigenous African Knowledge in the Social Science”, 32

⁶ *Ibid*, 33

⁷ *Ibid*, 40

⁸ M. F. C. Bourdillon, *Where are the ancestors?, Changing culture in Zimbabwe*, Harare, University of Zimbabwe Publications, 1997, 54

⁹ C. Malunga, *Power and Influence: Self Development Lessons From African Proverbs and Folktales*, Maryland, Lanham Publishers, 2011, 76

¹⁰ N. Sibanda, “An analysis of the Significance of Myths and Proverbs as African Philosophies of Peace and Justice: Case of the Ndebele, Shona and Tonga tribes from Zimbabwe and the Igbo from Nigeria”, *Journal of Humanities and Social Science* vol 20 (4), 2

¹¹ D. Chibvongodze, “The Ruralization of Urban Spaces in the Context of Subsistence Farming: The case of Gwabalanda Township, Bulawayo, Zimbabwe”, MA Thesis, unpublished, Durban, University of Kwazulu Natal, 2013, 160

¹² N. Sibanda, “An analysis of the Significance of Myths and Proverbs as African Philosophies of Peace and Justice: Case of the Ndebele, Shona and Tonga tribes from Zimbabwe and the Igbo from Nigeria”, *Journal of Humanities and Social Science* vol 20 (4), 2

¹³ *Ibid*, 2

¹⁴ K. Shoniwa, “Why folktales are important” *The Herald*, 11 November 2017

¹⁵ *Ibid*

¹⁶ *Ibid*

¹⁷ D. Chibvongodze, “The Ruralization of Urban Spaces in the Context of Subsistence Farming: The case of Gwabalanda Township, Bulawayo, Zimbabwe”, MA Thesis, unpublished, Durban, University of Kwazulu Natal, 2013, 160

¹⁸ De-Heusch, *Sacrifice in Africa: A Structuralist Approach*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1985, 67

¹⁹ D. Chibvongodze, “The Ruralization of Urban Spaces in the Context of Subsistence Farming: The case of Gwabalanda Township, Bulawayo, Zimbabwe”, MA Thesis, unpublished, Durban, University of Kwazulu Natal, 2013, 160

²⁰ T. Shoko, *Karanga Indigenous Religion in Zimbabwe: Health and Well-Being*, Hampshire, Ashgate Publishing, 2007, 89

²¹ *Ibid*, 89

²² J. Opland, *Xhosa Poets and Poetry*, Claremont, David Philip Publishers, 1998, 67

- ²³ Chibvongodze, “The Ruralization of Urban Spaces in the Context of Subsistence Farming: The case of Gwabalanda Township, Bulawayo, Zimbabwe”, 146
- ²⁴ J. Galaty, “Animal spirits and Mimetic Affairs: The Semiotics of Intimacy in African human/animal identities”, *Critique of Anthropology* vol 34 (1), 30-47
- ²⁵ J. Colding, C. Folke, “Social Taboos: “Invisible” Systems of Local Resources Management and Biological Conservation”, *Ecological Application*, Vol 11 (2), 584-600
- ²⁶ Interview with Tshabalala, Bulawayo, 24 August 2017
- ²⁷ T. Monda, “Ubuntu and Social Cohesion in Indigenous Music and Dance”, *The Patriot*, 23 March 2017, 20
- ²⁸ A. T. Magaisa, Drums, Lyrics and Melodies: Listening to the history of a Nation, “Seminar paper presented at The University of Nottingham” Nottingham, 12 June, 5
- ²⁹ *Ibid*, 5
- ³⁰ *Ibid*, 5
- ³¹ L. Mahanda, *Traditional Dances of Zimbabwe*, 2015, www.misicinafrica.net, accessed on 30 August 2017
- ³² *Ibid*
- ³³ T. Monda, “Ubuntu and Social Cohesion in Indigenous Music and Dance”, *The Patriot*, 23 March 2017, 20
- ³⁴ G. M. P. Khiyaza, “Uthando”, in D. E. Ndoda, *Isidlodlo SikaMthwakazi*, Gweru, Mambo Press, 2001, 17
- ³⁵ M. T. M. Mahlangu, “We Kufa”, in D. E. Ndoda, *Isidlodlo SikaMthwakazi*, Gweru, Mambo Press, 2001, 23

CHAPTER THREE

THE IMPACT OF CHRISTIANITY ON NDEBELE TRADITIONS, PRACTICES AND BELIEFS

3.0 Introduction

The chapter discusses the impact of Christianity on Ndebele traditions, practices and beliefs from the time of the arrival of missionaries in the Ndebele state up to the present day. According to Ndubuisi, Christianity has in time past and present impacted so much on African culture in general both positively and negatively and it is still doing so now.¹ As propounded by Vilhanova, cultural contacts with the West were no doubt led by the missions and were defined above all by their intensions to transform African societies.² When the Europeans came to Africa, they saw everything that is African as barbaric, evil, uncivilized and backward. Ndubuisi postulate that, some of these beliefs and practices have been found to be evil and out dated in nature in the contemporary times.³ Thus this chapter will discuss the negative and positive impacts of Christianity on the Ndebele traditions, practices and belief as a way of showing that Christianity has contributed largely to the fading of African culture.

3.1 The Negative impact of Christianity on Ndebele traditional religion

The coming of Christianity in the Ndebele state had negative impact on the Ndebele traditional religion. When the missionaries came to the Ndebele state, they regarded Ndebele religious activities as evil and barbaric hence they tried by all means to convert people into Christianity. Concerning the missionaries, Ndlovu-Gatsheni notes that they were more dangerous as cultural brokers because they wanted the Ndebele soul unlike the mining and farming magnets that merely wanted African labour and land.⁴ It is important to note that Christianity is not accommodative like African Traditional religion (ATR). ATR was accommodative because it

allowed dual religion. According to Ndubuisi, Mbiti propounds that ATR is a religion that has no known founder and scripture unlike Christianity and Islam. The tenets of the religion are written on the songs myths, dance of the people.⁵ Bhebhe postulates that the Ndebele conception of the relationship of the living and the spiritual world also emphasized seniority and status in the intercession with the ancestral spirits whereas the Christian view held that anyone could have direct access to God through prayers and sacrament.⁶ Thus according to the Ndebele traditional religion, God is the provider of everything. Thus it is important to deconstruct the European myth that Africans had no concept of God.

Ndubuisi notes that Awolalu and Dopamu state that ATR is a religion that has no written literature yet it is written everywhere for those who care to see and read. It is largely written in people's myths and folklores, in songs and dances, in their liturgies and in proverbs and pithy saying.⁷ The missionaries then introduced the bible both (English and vernacular) which played a remarkable role on the Ndebele religious beliefs and practices. The bible made it easy for the missionaries to preach the gospel of Christianity to the Africans and also the Africans began to read the written religious text which made it easy for them (the Ndebele) to defy their traditions, practices and beliefs.

Ndlovu-Gatsheni assert that the broader aim of the missionaries was that Ndebele culture was to be destructed and reconstructed mainly through converting them to Christianity since this culture religious ideology was viewed as the only way which could open the Ndebele to the western economic and political ethos.⁸ Thus Christianity destroyed much of the Ndebele cultural beliefs and values as they viewed them to be barbaric and also as they wanted to promote the imperialist agendas of the British.

Mission boarding schools contributed largely to the eradication of Ndebele IKSs. Literary tradition was introduced after the Christian missionaries had produced the bible and then published books of written history and oral literature. Children were indoctrinated into Christianity and forcing them to abandon ATR. Mission schools separated children from the influence parent and their traditional communities. Therefore western education which was introduced by the Christian missionaries controlled the minds of the children which made the loose the concept of Ubuntu. As education in school was going on, so was the building of Christian character in the Ndebele society. Christian education monitored church attendances as it was compulsory in boarding schools. It also monitored Christian morality and the cultural pattern among Africans as a way of removing traditional beliefs and practices among the Africans. Christianity demonized traditional religion and viewed the Ndebele religious shrines as places of evil worship.

According to Vilhanova, a Christian became “one who abandoned the customs”.⁹ They (missionaries) also banned traditional dances, songs, polygamy and Ndebele moral values in their mission schools, hospital and other areas of their occupation which compromised the Ndebele traditions, practices and beliefs. Ndlovu-Gatsheni states that the Ndebele culture and traditions were proving very able to satisfy all social and spiritual needs of the Ndebele including legitimizing kingship in the Ndebele society.¹⁰ This forced the missionaries to Christianize the Ndebele which was a negative impact to the Ndebele traditions, practices and beliefs.

The Ndebele traditional practitioners stood firm on the ancestral belief and had influence in the Ndebele society, hence the arrival of Christianity was a curse to the Ndebele culture as well as to the traditionalists as they saw that their status was going to decline if the people adopted

Christianity. Thus the coming of missionaries was a threat to the traditional practitioners which forced them to influence other members of the state to resist Christianity though with time they failed which gave Christianity dominion over the traditionalists up to the present day. Choto and Chakawa asserted that the missionaries in their evangelizing mission to Africa brought Christian education which was thought of as a sure way of psychologically conditioning the Africans to abandon their traditional religious belief systems and their faith in traditional healers.¹¹

Mission hospitals were built by the Christian missionaries so as to eradicate traditional healing which they termed it as witchcraft. They saw traditional healers as witch doctors. Chavhunduka points that the Medical Council of Modern Medicine did not recognize traditional healers as medical practitioners.¹² The mission hospital were not allowed to attend to patients who had first visited a traditional healer or taken traditional medicine. Choto and Chakawa state that, colonial administrators weighed in by enacting acts like the Witchcraft Suppression Act whose main thrust was to suppress the activities of traditional healers.¹³ They further point out that, to further denigrate traditional healers, colonial officials referred to them as witchdoctors, herbalists, sorcerers or diviners.¹⁴ These laws had negative impact on the Ndebele traditional healers as their works were undermined by the arrival of Christianity in the society and they also reduced the confidence of people on their traditional forms of medication as they saw western medicine more holy and effective than indigenous medical knowledge and practices.

The Ndebele also used some charms to protect their property from thieves. One would place the charm where the property is to be protected, for example at the field, kraal or homestead. If the thief tried to steal that property, he/she will not be able to leave the premises until the owner comes and catches him/her in the act. That was a way of promoting respect for one's property

and also to encourage people to learn to ask than to still. Thus it promoted Ubuntu in the Ndebele society. When Christianity was introduced among the Ndebele, such acts were viewed as witchcraft and evil yet it was a way of reducing crime in the Ndebele society. Therefore Christianity paved way for high crime rate in the Ndebele society as people neglected their traditional practices of protecting their property which punished the invaders instantly.

Apart from traditional religion, Christianity demonized the Ndebele the Ndebele traditional supplication ceremonies as they regarded it as evil. Christianity viewed such practices as evil but it was similar to the manner in which Abraham sacrificed a lamb for God when God was testing his faith. Like other religions in the world, the Ndebele traditions shared some similarities though they deemed it to be evil. The Ndebele believed in God and they spoke to Him through spirit mediums. They also prayed and worshiped like in Christianity and also made sacrifices as a way of worshipping and begging the ancestors to talk to God on their behalf. Thus because the use of spirit mediums in communicating with God, Christian missionaries saw it as evil and they made it a point that they convert as many Ndebele people as possible as a way of eliminating the Ndebele religious beliefs and promoting Christianity.

More so, the Ndebele used to go to Njelele in large numbers before the colonial period for rainmaking ceremonies during drought. They also performed thanks giving ceremonies to the ancestors by brewing beer, sacrificing animal, singing and dancing. According to Manwa, it was believed that ancestral spirits of the people lived among these hills.¹⁵ Wilson elaborates by saying in most African communities, the ancestral spirits are believed to be living in the forests and special trees, caves and ruined homes and water bodies.¹⁶ Thus with the arrival of Christianity, people lost their respect of some of the religious sites in the forests and started to do

the hunting, cutting down trees and doing all sought of activities without fear of the ancestors. This has also contributed to some black spots in the road where many accidents occur because the areas were sacred before the arrival of the Europeans and the ancestors are angry because they were disrespected through the adoption of Christianity.

As part of tradition, practices and belief, the Ndebele used to do propitiation (*umbuyiso*) ceremonies after the father or mother, grandfather/mother had passed on. Propitiation is a custom which is done to bring the spirit of the deceased at home so that he/she can protect his/her children. Traditionally it is believed that when a person dies the spirit will be wandering in the forest. Ancestral veneration is therefore done to bring that spirit home. It was believed that the spirit of the dead would be wandering around as long as the ceremony was not done, hence the family had to do the ceremony and perform rituals. When the Christian missionaries arrived in the Ndebele state, they replaced that traditional practice by doing memorial services which suited Christianity. Therefore Christianity came with another form of *umbuyiso* which replaced the traditional practice and belief. Nowadays few Ndebele people are traditionalist and practice such religious belief because Christianity has dominated the whole Ndebele society and the African continent at large.

3.2 Ndebele culture and the impact of Christianity

The Ndebele customs were also attacked by the introduction of the Christianity in the Ndebele society. According to the Ndebele custom, elders are to be respected by children and those who are young. In the Ndebele culture, women are not equal to men and so was the king to his subjects. Thus when John Smith Moffat gave his sermon in 1860 among the Ndebele, he stated that all men were equal before God. Ndlovu-Gatsheni posits that John Smith Moffat`s sermon of

the 15th of July 1860 about equality of all men regardless of age, sex and position in society before God was too radical for the Ndebele society where issues of status were highly valued.¹⁷ Such evangelical sermons were a serious threat to Ndebele political and social structure and the king was regarded as supreme than any member in the society. Men were also regarded as superior over women. Therefore Christianity led to the undermining of the elders in the society hence destroying the Ndebele traditions and beliefs to suit the interests of the missionaries.

The Ndebele traditional marriage system was also affected Christianity. Christianity condemned polygamy and embraced monogamy. Ndubuisi articulates that they saw polygamy as an ideal way of dispensing social justice to women by providing husbands for all women. Another area that has been eroded and discarded was that of oath-taking. People now take oaths according to their religious inclination and no longer on the basis of their original rich cultural heritage.¹⁸ It was not easy for the missionaries to convert the Ndebele because of their cultural practice and belief in polygamy. They were not willing to leave their wives and they were used to it.

In relation to the above, Zvogbo states that Fr Peter Prestige saw polygamy as the purchase of a wife by a man for purpose of begetting children, among whom girls, when marriageable, are disposed of to obtain *lobola*, which is used again to purchase other wives, the final object being to acquire position and substance through possession of women and children.¹⁹ Thus on the issue of polygamy Christianity saw it as commoditization of women hence they wanted it to be banned by law. Thus with the adoption of Christianity, polygamy reduced with time and at the present moment it is not popular among the Ndebele traditions.

3.3 Christianity on totems and sacred animals

Christianity also had negative impact on the Ndebele totems and taboos. In the Ndebele culture, one is not allowed to eat an animal which has his/her surname. The Ndebele who converted to Christianity began to believe that they were not bounded by the norms of their Ndebele traditions and beliefs. The converted Christians began to kill and eat the animals that have their totems which was regarded as taboo in the Ndebele tradition and belief. Some animals which were regarded as sacred by the Ndebele society were killed by the converted Africans basing their action on the bible which say that God created animals so that people can kill and eat them. These animals include, python, puff adder, pangolin and leopard. Traditional religion of the Ndebele respect such kind of animals and harming them is a taboo or abomination. Thus with the adoption of Christianity, such animal are now running into extinction because people kill them for monetary reasons, food or for fun. Therefore Christianity undermined the Ndebele traditions, practices and beliefs.

3.4 Christianity and Ndebele political traditions, practice and beliefs

Christianity also diverted the political traditions, practices and beliefs of the Ndebele society. Due to the introduction of Christianity in the Ndebele society, the traditional leaders and politicians have abandoned the religiously laid rules as well as the traditional rituals that were done before the coming of Christianity. That has created serious problems especially during the time of the restoration of the Ndebele monarchy on the 13th of September 2017 in which Western style of inauguration was to be conducted and the inauguration was blocked by the police.

3.5 Positive impacts of Christianity on Ndebele traditions, practices and beliefs

Though Christianity had some negative effect on the Ndebele traditions, practices and belief, it also had some positive impact on the Ndebele society. It made Africans to be able to read and write which made communication with other societies much easier especially during and after colonial rule.

Christianity managed to reduce the discrimination of women in the Ndebele society. Some women were forced to be engaged in arranged marriages which were the violation of their right of choice. The discrimination of women by male counterparts was elaborated by Ukah who articulated that, this was reinforced by African myth, folklore, taboos and proverbs, all of which attributed most of the ills in human society to women.²⁰ Thus by discouraging the discrimination of women, Christianity brought positive impact on the Ndebele practices, traditions and beliefs.

Christianity also condemned witchcraft among Africans which included the use of *ulunyoka* (fidelity charm) by mostly married couples as a way of punishing those who committed adultery. This was an evil way of dealing with criminals as Christianity emphasizes that only God has the responsibility of punishing those who commit sins. This also brought sense of forgiveness amongst the Africans who were once enemies and also reduced witchcraft among Africans as they fear the punishment from God.

3.6 Conclusion

In a nutshell, Christianity had a negative impact on the Ndebele traditions, beliefs and practices as it led to the destruction or unpopularity of Ndebele traditional religion, polygamy, *ukuthethela*, ancestral veneration which created unit amongst the Ndebele society. Mission schools also contributed largely to the destruction of Ndebele traditions, practices and beliefs as

children were forced to embrace Christianity as the true religion. However it will be historically improper to look at the negative side of Christianity. It also had some positive impact in the Ndebele society. It gave women right to make choices when it came to choosing husbands. Women are no longer forced into polygamy. It also improved the Ndebele society through education though that education was also for the benefit of the Christian missionaries.

ENDNOTES

- ¹ I. C. Ngubuisi, “Influence of Christian Religion on African Traditional Religion And Values System”, *Research on Humanities and Social Science* Vol 4 (9), 2014, 150
- ² V. P. Vilhanova, “Christian Missions in Africa and their Role in the Transformation of African societies”, *Asian and African Studies*, vol 16 (2), 2007, 257
- ³ Ngubuisi, “Influence of Christian Religion on African Traditional Religion And Value System”, 148
- ⁴ S. J. Ndlovu-Gatsheni, “Rethinking Religious Encounters in Matabeleland Region of Zimbabwe, 1860-1893”, *African Journal of History and Culture (AJHC)* Vol. 1 (2), 2009, 18
- ⁵ Ngubuisi, “Influence of Christian Religion on African Traditional Religion And Value System”, 148
- ⁶ N. Bhebhe, *Christianity and Traditional Religion in Western Zimbabwe, 1859-1923*, London, Longman, 1979
- ⁷ Ngubuisi, “Influence of Christian Religion on African Traditional Religion And Values System”, 149
- ⁸ Ndlovu-Gatsheni, “Rethinking Religious Encounters in Matabeleland Region of Zimbabwe, 1860-1893”, 18
- ⁹ Vilhanova, “Christian Missions in Africa and their Role in the Transformation of African societies”, 255
- ¹⁰ S. J. Ndlovu-Gatsheni, “Rethinking Religious Encounters in Matabeleland Region of Zimbabwe, 1860-1893”, 19
- ¹¹ I. Choto and J. Chakawa, “Indigenous Knowledge Systems as a Survival Tool in the 21st Century Rural Zimbabwe. A Case of Selected Rural Communities in Zimbabwe”, *Journal of Development Studies* vol 1 (1), 2010, 45

- ¹² G. Chavhunduka, *The African Religion in Zimbabwe Today*, Harare, 2001, p1-10
- ¹³ Choto and Chakawa, “Indigenous Knowledge Systems as a Survival Tool in the 21st Century Rural Zimbabwe. A Case of Selected Rural Communities in Zimbabwe”, 45
- ¹⁴ *Ibid*, 45
- ¹⁵ H.A. Manwa, “Is Zimbabwe Ready to Venture into Cultural Tourism Market?”, *Development Southern Africa* vol 24 (3), 465-474
- ¹⁶ K. B. Wilson, “Trees in Fields in Southern Zimbabwe: Special issue on the Politics of Conservation in Southern Africa”, *Journal of Southern African Studies* vol 15 (2), 1989
- ¹⁷ Ndlovu-Gatsheni, Rethinking Religious Encounters in Matabeleland Region of Zimbabwe, 1860-1893, 22
- ¹⁸ Ngubuisi, “Influence of Christian Religion on African Traditional Religion And Values System”, 151
- ¹⁹ C. J. Zvogbo, “Aspects of Interaction Between Christianity and African Culture in Colonial Zimbabwe, 1893-1934”, *The African e-journal*, 1986, 44 available on www.lib.msu.africanjournal
- ²⁰ E. M. Ukah, *Issues in Theology, Mission, Church and society*, Calabar, Clear-lines Publishers, 1999, 56

CONCLUSION

The Ndebele ideological framework played a vital role in the promotion of the philosophy of Ubuntu. The Ndebele society used various hidden forms of promoting Ubuntu. Folktales had a significant role that promoted the philosophy of Ubuntu. In this study, it is indicated that folktales were used to educate people in the Ndebele society, they also served as warnings to the children and the society as a whole. They were also used to educate people on the spirit of togetherness, forgiveness, respect and promoting dignity of the people in the society. Folktales are also part of the curriculum in schools hence they continue to play their role that promoted Ubuntu.

Proverbs also played a vital role that promoted the philosophy of Ubuntu in the pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial Ndebele society. They served the same purpose as folktales. These were traditional ways of educating the Ndebele society. They also created the spirit of unity among the Ndebele and also indicated one's status in the society. Thus they played an important role in the promotion of Ubuntu in the Ndebele society. Songs and dance also had a fundamental role that promoted the philosophy of Ubuntu. Music and dance also symbolized unity and Ubuntu among the Ndebele. Different dances were done in relation to the situation that the community was facing.

Dressing was also used by the Ndebele to promote the philosophy of Ubuntu. The king wore leopard skin which was a symbol of power. Commoners were not expected to wear such kind of animal skin as they were a sign of showing the status of a king. Boys would wear their animal skins which were of animals that signified no power. This was a way of showing one's dignity and status in the society. Girls and women were expected to wear *imsisi* which were different

from that was worn by men. Thus dressing had a significant role that promoted the philosophy of Ubuntu. Other IKSs which contributed largely to the promotion of Ubuntu included taboos, totems and ATR among others.

The research also focused on the applicability of the Ndebele ideological framework in contemporary Ndebele society. The study shows that the Ndebele ideological framework is still applicable in the contemporary Ndebele society. In some rural areas, children still get time with their grandparents to tell them stories. The school curriculum have incorporated traditional ways of education into the formal education. At primary schools, children get time to tell folktales to their classmates as a way of educating each other. High schools write ZIMSEC exams which include folktales and proverbs in the Ndebele exam paper. Therefore, the Ndebele ideological framework is still applicable in the contemporary Ndebele society.

In the religious sector, people still practice traditional religion in the Ndebele society. People still visit eNjelele for rain making ceremonies or other activities that require the ancestral intervention. Some also visit traditional healers if they have health problems that Western medicine cannot cure. In some homes they still practice *ukuthethela* and they also do *imbuyiso* which indicate that the Ndebele ideological framework is still applicable in the contemporary Ndebele society.

In the third chapter, the study shows the impact of Christianity on the Ndebele traditions, beliefs and practices. Christianity had both positive and negative impacts on the Ndebele traditions, beliefs and practices. When Europeans came to Africa, they saw every African practice as barbaric, evil and backward. Thus when they got to the Ndebele state, they demonized the IKSs of the Ndebele which led to the dominance of Christianity. Christianity also brought positive

impacts which included better education, freedom of marriage for women and demonization of witchcraft.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Oral Interviews

Mr. J. Gasela, Bulawayo, 24 August 2017

Mr. A. Gumede, Bulawayo, 24 August 2017

Mrs. Mbambo Bulawayo, 23 August 2017

Mrs. Mlangeni-Vundla, Bulawayo, 25 August 2017

Mrs. Moyo, Bulawayo, 23 August 2017

Mr. D. Ndlovu, Nkayi, 28 July 2017

Mr. J. Nkomo, Bulawayo, 24 August 2017

Mr. P. Nyathi, Bulawayo, 25 August 2017

Mrs. P. Tshabalala, Bulawayo, 23 August 2017

Secondary sources

Ajayi, *General History of Africa. Vi, Africa in The Nineteenth Century Until 1880s*, (bridge edition), James Curry, California, 1998

Bhebhe. N. *Christianity and Traditional Religion in Western Zimbabwe, 1859-1923*, London, Longman 1999

Bourdillon. M. F. C, *Where are the ancestors?, Changing culture in Zimbabwe*, Harare, University of Zimbabwe Publications, 1997

Chavhunduka. G. L, *Traditional Medicine in Modern Zimbabwe*, Harare, UZ Publishers, 1995

Chavhunduka. G. L, *The African Religion in Zimbabwe Today*, Harare, 2001

De-Heusch, *Sacrifice in Africa: A Structuralist Approach*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1985

- Ibekwe. P, *The Little Book of African Wisdom*, Oxford, New Internationalist Publications Ltd, 2002
- Kant. I, *Critique of Pure Reason*, Macmillan, New York, 1982
- Kay. G, *Rhodesia: A human Geography*, London, University of London Press Ltd
- Khiyaza. G. M. P, “Uthando”, in Ndoda. D. E, *Isidlodlo SikaMthwakazi*, Gweru, Mambo Press, 2001
- Mahlangu. M. T. M, “We Kufa”, in Ndoda. D. E, *Isidlodlo SikaMthwakazi*, Gweru, Mambo Press, 2001
- Malunga. C, *Power and Influence: Self Development Lessons From African Proverbs and Folktales*, Maryland, Lanham Publishers, 2011
- Ndlovu. T. M., et al, *Imikhuba Lamasiko AmaNdebele*, Gweru, Mambo Press, 1995
- Opland. J, *Xhosa Poets and Poetry*, Claremont, David Philip Publishers, 1998
- Pelling. J.N, *A Practical Ndebele Dictionary*, Harare, Longman, 1994
- Rasmussen. K, *The Migrant Kingdom: Mzilikazi and the Ndebele South of the Limpopo*, London, Rex Colling Ltd, 1978
- Samkange. S, Samkange T. M, *Hunhuism or Ubuntuism*, Graham Publishing, Harare
- Shoko. T, *Karanga Indigenous Religion in Zimbabwe: Health and Well-Being*, Hampshire, Ashgate Publishing, 2007
- Shutte. A, *Ubuntu: An Ethic for a New South Africa*, Cluster publications, Pietermaritzburg, 2001
- Ukah. E. M, *Issues in Theology, Mission, Church and society*, Calabar, Clear-lines Publishers, 1999

Articles and journals

Choto. I and Chakawa. J, “Indigenous Knowledge Systems as a Survival Tool in the 21st Century Rural Zimbabwe. A Case of Selected Rural Communities in Zimbabwe”, *Journal of Development Studies* vol 1 (1), 2010

Colding. J, Folke. C, “Social Taboos: “Invisible” Systems of Local Resources Management and Biological Conservation”, *Ecological Application*, Vol 11 (2)

Galaty. J, “Animal spirits and Mimetic Affairs: The Semiotics of Intimacy in African human/animal identities”, *Critique of Anthropology* vol 34 (1)

Manwa. H.A, “Is Zimbabwe Ready to Venture into Cultural Tourism Market?”, *Development Southern Africa* vol 24 (3)

Monda. T, “Ubuntu and Social Cohesion in Indigenous Music and Dance”, *The Patriot*, 24-30 March 2017

Ndlovu-Gatsheni. S. J, “Rethinking Religious Encounters in Matabeleland Region of Zimbabwe, 1860-1893”, *African Journal of History and Culture (AJHC)* Vol. 1 (2), 2009

Ngubuisi. I. C, “Influence of Christian Religion on African Traditional Religion and Values System”, *Research on Humanities and Social Science* Vol 4 (9), 2014

Sibanda. N, “An analysis of the Significance of Myths and Proverbs as African Philosophies of Peace and Justice: Case of the Ndebele, Shona and Tonga tribes from Zimbabwe and the Igbo from Nigeria”, *Journal of Humanities and Social Science* vol 20 (4)

Sigauke. A. T, “Ubuntu/Hunhu in Post-colonial Education Policies In Southern Africa: A Response To Connell’s Southern Theory and the Role of Indigenous African Knowledge in the Social Science”, *Post-colonial Directions in Education* vol 5(1)

Vilhanova. V. P, “Christian Missions in Africa and their Role in the Transformation of African societies”, *Asian and African Studies*, vol 16 (2), 2007

Wilson. K. B, “Trees in Fields in Southern Zimbabwe: Special issue on the Politics of Conservation in Southern Africa”, *Journal of Southern African Studies* vol 15 (2), 1989

Unpublished sources

Chibvongodze. D, “The Ruralization of Urban Spaces in the Context of Subsistence Farming: The case of Gwabalanda Township, Bulawayo, Zimbabwe”, MA Thesis, unpublished, Durban, University of Kwazulu Natal, 2013

Cobbing J, “Ndebele Religion in the 19th Century”, Unpublished Henderson Paper, University of Rhodesia, 1974

Magaisa. A. T, Drums, Lyrics and Melodies: Listening to the history of a Nation, “Seminar paper presented at The University of Nottingham” Nottingham

Ndlovu. S, undergraduate Dissertation: “The Role played by National Arts Council of Zimbabwe (NACZ) programmes in the preservation and promotion of the Ndebele Culture”, 2010

Internet sources

Broodryk. J, *Understanding South Africa: the Ubuntu way of Living*. Pretoria: Ubuntu School of Philosophy, 2008, retrieved from www.globalsocialwork.org, accessed on 25 August 2017

Cheemalakonda. R, “Use of Folk Arts in Mass Communication”, available on www.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:240464/FULLTEXT02.pdfFeminist, accessed on 5 May 2017

Dolamo. R, *Botho/Ubuntu: The Heart Of African Ethics*, scriptura.journals.ac.za

Groenewald. H. S, "I Control the Idioms: Creativity in Ndebele Praise Poetry", 30, available on journal.oraltradition.org, accessed on 24 April 2017

Gundani. M. P.D, et al, "Mnqgwayi: a stick throwing game of the Kalanga people of Zimbabwe", Department of Sport science and Coaching and Department of Records and Archive Management, National University of Science and Technology, retrieved from www.isdy.net, accessed on 5 May 2017

Helgestad. A. H, *Ubuntu Management: Scrutinizing Black and White Stereotypes in Contemporary South African Management Discourse*, available on studenttheses.cbs.dk, accessed on 24 April 2017

Mahanda. L, *Traditional Dances of Zimbabwe*, 2015, www.musicinafrica.net, accessed on 30 August 2017

Mazarire. G. C, "Who are the Ndebele and the Kalanga in Zimbabwe?" Paper Prepared for Konrad Adenauer Foundation Project on Ethnicity in Zimbabwe, 2003, 3 retrieved from ir.uz.ac.zw accessed on 09 April 2017

Ndlovu. S, et al, "Zimbabwean Politics and Ndebele Folktales: Machiavellian Parallels" *International Journal of Asian Social Science*, available on www.aessweb.com accessed on 9 April 2017

Ndlovu-Gtasheni. S. J, *Hegemony, Memory and Historiography*, Rozenberg Publishers, 2009, available on rozenbergquarterly.com, accessed on 09 April 2017

Pearce. C, "Tsika, Hunhu and the Moral Education Of Primary School Children," *Afrifrican e-journals Projects*, www.digital.lib.msu.edu/africanjournals

Shoniwa. K, "Why folktales are important", *The Herald*, 11 November 2017 retrieved from www.theherald.co.zw accessed on 15 September 2017

Van der Merwe. F.J.G and Bressan E.S, “Traditional Games of the Xhosa of South Africa”,
African Journal for Physical, Health Education, Recreation and Dance (AJHERD) Vol.1 No.1,
1995, retrieved from www.isdy.net, accessed on 5 May 2017

www.kubatana.net accessed on 09 April 2017

Zvogbo. C. J, “Aspects of Interaction Between Christianity and African Culture in Colonial
Zimbabwe,1893-1934”,*The African e-journal*, 1986, 44 available on www.lib.msu.africanjournal