

A Comparative Analysis of the influence of Folklore on the works of the following African writers: Chinua Achebe, Es'kia Mphahlele, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o and Andrew Nkadimeng. An Afrocentric approach.

By

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Declaration

I, Mapula Rosina Khunwane, hereby declare that this thesis for a Doctor of Philosophy Degree in African Studies at the University of Venda, has not been submitted previously for a degree at this or any other university, that it is my own work in design and in execution, and that all reference material contained herein has been duly acknowledged.

Signature..... Date

Abstract

African authors play a significant role in passing on African folklore. Their writing is often influenced by their lived experiences and the social context embedded within folklore. Folklore houses the cultural beliefs, customs and traditions of a society and is passed on from one generation to the next through oral and written literature. Many African authors' works instil an appreciation of people's African identity, customs and beliefs. The aim of this study was to explore the extent to which folklore had influenced the writings of four selected African authors: Chinua Achebe, a renowned author from Nigeria, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o from Kenya, Es'kia Mphahlele and Andrew Nkadimeng, both from South Africa. These African authors, who chose to write their stories in English rather than in their African language, were influenced by the folklore they were exposed to in their upbringing. The objective of the study was to identify various aspects of folklore and demonstrate how folklore had remained entrenched in the writings of these African authors, despite the fact that they were telling their stories in the English language. The research was qualitative in nature and a hermeneutic research method was used to describe and interpret the meaning of texts as used by the authors and to explore the influence of folklore in the text. The study will be a useful resource for teachers in the Further Education and Training (FET) band in schools (grade 10 to 12) which includes folklore studies as part of its syllabus. Currently, folklore is studied in schools only in terms of Oral Literature. However, Oral Literature is just one aspect of folklore, as is discussed in this study. The study will also contribute towards efforts to re-establish Africans' dignity and identity.

Dedication

This study is dedicated to my late mother, Pulane Maria Khunwane, who passed away in 1989 during the last year of my undergraduate degree. She was my support system in my early years of studying, and when I started my junior degree, I promised her I would study even harder to be able to put on the red gown. I am dedicating this to her as I have fulfilled the promise that I made in 1988, to have the red gown. Here is the red gown, Ma.

“Robala ka khutšo, Mokgalaka!”

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List of Acronyms

BCFS: British Columbia Folklore Society

CAPS: Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement

CoGTA: Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs

DBE: Department of Basic Education

DO: District Officer

FET: Further Education and Training

GET: General Education and Training

IKS: Indigenous Knowledge Systems

LTSM: Learner Teacher Support Material

NCDS: Northern Corridor Doctoral School

NIHSS: National Institute for the Humanities and Social Sciences

SAHUDA: South African Humanities Deans Association

STD: Sexually Transmitted Diseases

Chapter 1: Introduction

This study aimed to show that although the four African novels under review were written in English, they reveal the strong influences of the writers' folklore. The authors wrote about what they knew, what they had experienced and what they saw happening in their everyday lives. Using conceptual studies and taking a hermeneutic approach, this study will prove beneficial in showing the importance of preserving African culture and self-identity, while enhancing the teaching and learning of folklore.

Background to the Problem

Folklore is an integral part of the lives of many African people who, consciously or unconsciously, live it, sleep it and eat it. Despite living in Westernised countries, African folklore permeates Western philosophy.

While research has been conducted on folklore, its influence on the writings of African authors has received limited attention. Khunwane (2011) researched the influence of orality on O. K. Matsepe's novel, *Lešitaphiri*, and found that textuality started as oral transmission. This study sought to understand the extent to which authors writing in a second or third language were influenced by their folklore.

Folklore has a history dating back hundreds of years and is entrenched in African people's way of life, their belief systems, their food and their healing. To some extent, man's evolution has affected folklore's prominence. It has been neglected in many communities where people have left their villages to move to townships or suburban communities where practising cultural rituals has become a thing of the past and is regarded as uncivilised.

Many factors can be attributed to the marginalisation of folklore around the globe (Makgopa, 2008, p. 9). Makgopa (2008) indicated how in present-day South Africa, technology had led to the marginalisation of African folklore. However, technology, whether in the form of a website or a television show can play a major role in restoring African folklore and the

associated traditions. It would give African youth an opportunity to debate about their own cultural experiences and could be a viable tool for promoting cultural awareness and instilling in the youth a sense of their Africanness. African writers have recently resolved to reposition African folklore, advocating for Africans to take advantage of technology. Makgopa (2008) maintained that technology should not be used to shun African cultural practices and traditions; instead, it should be used to preserve and promote them.

Today, technology is at the forefront of African children's lives. Storytelling has been superseded by technology to the extent that children no longer listen or have interest in what others are saying. During their free time, when not engrossed in a television show or listening to commercialised popular music through their earphones, children spend many hours on Facebook, Twitter or Instagram, making new friends locally and internationally. Social media is where the youth spend most of their time out of school interacting with friends, presenting an ideal platform for them to share their views about their cultural experiences.

The new adult generation has also been absorbed into Westernised popular culture, which poses an obstacle to transferring African culture from one generation to the next. Thus, their African identity is being greatly altered, leading to a loss of many aspects of folklore, such as customs, beliefs and traditions.

Although some African authors write in English, their writings remain shielded in the folklore that runs through their veins, suggesting that African literature may be the only hope for preserving folklore.

This study argued that African authors were influenced by their folklore when they wrote. Regardless of the language they used, elements of folklore continued to appear in their writings. These African authors wrote about what they knew, what they lived in their everyday lives and what they had seen their parents and other members of their community do. Their works epitomise the underlying ambition of folklore: to preserve the word-of-mouth lessons

taught by parents, relatives and other members of the community.

Africans embrace *Ubuntu*,¹ and in terms of the African culture and tradition, a person cannot enter a household and leave without being offered either food to eat or water to drink.

Mashige (2002) stated,

ubuntu is a practice that is informed by and predicated on humanistic values such as empathy, sharing, respect for the other, humanness, gentleness, hospitality and mutual acceptance in human interaction. (p. 54)

According to Mashige (2002), the African way of living informs the manner in which Africans should behave – their worldview, their belief system and their social conduct – without being prescriptive. Africans should go back to their roots and live and practice their African culture, so that their children would know their identity, and become Africans in the true sense of the word; so that what they read about in books is the same as what they see being practised in their homes and communities.

Folklore is defined as the social customs, beliefs and common practices that are orally passed on from one generation to the next (Makgopa, 2008). Folklore is gradually being reintroduced into the General Education and Training (GET) and Further Education and Training (FET) band curriculum for home languages in South African schools. In the GET band, from grade 4 to grade 9, all learners are expected to go through the entire programme. Subject groupings are demarcated into six major learning fields, with folklore being incorporated into Life Skills in the intermediate phase and Life Orientation in the Senior Phase. In the GET band, Life Skills and Life Orientation address the concerns that most folklorists had about the study of folklore as a discipline.

¹ *Ubuntu* – the African way of life that encompasses humanity.

Learners at an early stage of their education are encouraged to develop a love and interest in matters pertaining to their culture and tradition. Efforts of this nature show a serious commitment regarding the preservation of the indigenous heritage as well as to rectify the mistakes of the past (Makgopa, 2008, p. 13).

Although folklore is also being reintroduced in the FET band, grade 10 to grade 12, it is not compulsory (CAPS, 2011) and learners are given a choice between folklore and a novel. There is often a tendency, when requesting prescribed literature material for grade 10–12 classes, for teachers to choose a novel in favour of the less familiar folklore genre. If folklore were made compulsory for these grades, learners would be compelled to learn it, thus expanding their knowledge of their culture and tradition, and what is expected of them as African children. This would encourage them to grow up respecting themselves and others.

Not enforcing the folklore genre deprives the learners of exposure to the entire programme, as in the GET band (DBE Circular E8 of 2015), thereby diminishing the status of folklore. Until the Department of Basic Education (DBE) decides to make folklore a compulsory genre, it will not be considered to have claimed back its status. At present, folklore is not considered an important aspect of the lives of poor South Africans.

Problem Statement

The problem to be investigated in this study was the confusion that has been brought about by the developers of learning and teaching support materials (LTSM). Curriculum developers prescribed the teaching of folklore in the FET band in schools, but the LTSM developers developed material for oral literature only, which is just one aspect of folklore, rather than developing material for all four aspects of folklore. This study aimed to highlight the four aspects of folklore as they appear in the four selected books by African authors. While focusing on a comparative analysis of the influence of folklore, this study has also highlighted

the elements of folklore.

It is imperative when trying to reach a wider readership that writers remain true to themselves. Although some African authors use foreign languages, such as English which is a universal language, their writing is often influenced by their folklore, thereby retaining their authenticity.

Westernisation and technological advancements have caused much of the African community to turn its back on its own culture and tradition. African literature, therefore, is critical for preserving African folklore. African authors' writings are intertwined with what they have learnt from lived experiences and the oral transmission of knowledge from their elders. The purpose of this study was to demonstrate that folklore is marginalised, and it being marginalised, even material developed for folklore only talks of oral literature and exclude the other three aspects, which are, social customs; occupational folk life and material folklore.

Study Objectives

The aim of this study was to demonstrate the connection between orality and textuality as reflected in the writings of four selected African writers, who wrote in a foreign language rather than in their mother tongue. They wrote about what they saw and learnt during their upbringing as African children. The study focused on how the four selected African writers – E'skia Mphahlele, Chinua Achebe, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o and Andrew Nkadimeng – expressed their opinions and experiences using a foreign language. Furthermore, the study sought to determine whether, having been written in a foreign language, their writings were influenced in any way by their cultural practices, customs, beliefs and traditions.

Research Questions

Research questions refer to the questions that the research should answer. There are two types: primary research questions and secondary research questions. According to Maree (2007, p. 25), a primary research question is the reformulation of the statement of purpose so

that it forms a question. A secondary research question needs to be closely linked to the primary question and to the statement of purpose. The primary research question for this research was:

- How does folklore influence the writings of some African authors?

The secondary research questions were:

- Which aspects of folklore are common in the writings of the identified African authors?
- Does folklore play a role in the lives of African authors who write in a foreign language rather than their own?

Significance of the Study

The rationale is the statement that justifies why the study is necessary and serves to answer the following questions:

- How did the researcher develop an interest in the topic?
- Why does the researcher believe the research is worth conducting?

(Maree, 2007. p. 28)

Language plays a vital role in the articulation of words in the author's mind. The study is significant because, while orality influences textuality, the authors who use a language other than their home languages are influenced by their cultural practices, customs, beliefs and traditions. Their thinking is influenced by their own language. Authors who write in a language other than their home language, are often influenced in their writing because of the language they use in their thinking. Phaahla (2012) reasoned that:

Language is viewed as a repository of the traditions and cultural accomplishments of its speech community as well as being a kind of cultural accomplishment. It is a vehicle through which a community creates a way of life for itself and is intrinsically bound up with that way of life. Hence most people value their language not only instrumentally, as a tool, but also intrinsically, as a marker of identity as a participant in the way of life it represents. (p. 127)

Africans must consider the role of language in their lives, not only as a tool for driving their thoughts, but also as an instrument that defines who they really are in the communities in which they find themselves.

Folklore is an important aspect of culture and carries people's identity. It is a means through which a society defines its values, beliefs, norms, customs and traditions. African folklore is the heritage of an African society, young and old, and a society without folklore is a lost society. Considering the significance of folklore in the life of African children, this study is significant in that it will help them to grow up knowing who they are and where they come from, and to be proud of who they are. Their identity as Africans needs to be inculcated in them as they progress to adulthood.

This study is also significant in that it will serve as a resource for teachers in the education system, to assist them in understanding the value of folklore and the role it plays in the lives of their learners. The study will therefore help in the preservation of the African culture and in the restoration of African self-identity. Furthermore, the study will assist in clearing up any confusion brought about by LTSM developers who have equated folklore with oral literature.

In addition, the study wanted to highlight the value of African philosophy, which inculcates the values of culture and tradition in the lives of African children so that they grow up knowing their roots and who they really are as they progress to adulthood. In an era where children are raised in a Eurocentric context – within a Westernised culture of pop music and multiracial schools – African philosophy has been undermined and some children cannot even speak their mother tongue properly.

Operational Terms

The following concepts referred to in this study formed the nucleus of the research:

Folklore. Folklore is the knowledge that has been passed on from generation to generation by word of mouth. It constitutes knowledge that was orally transferred from an adult to a child, that was not documented or that people could read about in books, because of illiteracy within African communities. Seboni (2011) argued that

folklore does not have an author; it arises from everywhere and changes in a regular way, independently of people's will once there are appropriate conditions for it in historical development of people. (p. 6)

Folklore simply refers to occurrences or practices that exist within every society and forms part of that society's heritage (Seboni, 2011). Kruger (2002) viewed folklore as:

comprising the transmitted verbalisation of events and values that are inherently part of the human race as a species – values that are specific and nonetheless universal, such as integrity, loyalty, honour, freedom, etc. (p. 97)

Folklore is not owned by anyone; it is for the entire society as confirmed by Makgopa, Mapaya and Thobejane (2012):

When the concept of folklore is unpacked, it becomes clear that cultural beliefs form part of its meaning. Ultimately, folklore is simply the learning of (ordinary) people's knowledge and the common belief structures prevalent within a given society. (p. 105)

Galane (2003) asserted that traditional music and dance are also part of folklore, are not protected by any law, and do not have copyright. Samples of traditional songs have been incorporated into popular music genres such as house, as the producers do not need to acquire

copyright.

Oral literature. Oral literature is a stylised, artistic manner of speech used to communicate myths, folktales, legends, proverbs and poetry (Seymour-Smith, 1986). All forms of oral literature were not written, but were passed on from one generation to another by word of mouth (Seymour-Smith, 1986). Oral literature has therefore assumed an integral place in folklore in which the elders would pass on traditional ideologies through generations. These stories were often told to the children in the evening around a fire, with the purpose of preparing them, before they went to sleep, to ponder and reflect upon the message and the moral lessons of the tales (Mashige, 2002). This explains how a writer's work may be influenced by his/her oral tradition, which is part of folklore.

Textuality. Textuality refers to all written text. Grossman (2004) posited that although textuality comes after orality, it becomes the primary mode of social and cultural organisation, more especially in the establishment of norms, beliefs and ideologies. Textuality can be seen, heard, read and interacted with, and distinguishes print, electronic and oral media (Hayles, 2002). These three forms of media have a different form of textuality that reflects the way the sensory modalities are stimulated:

- Textuality in the oral medium as sound
- Textuality in the electronic medium as the interactivity of a website or visual as in a specific television show, and
- Textuality in the print medium as the physicality of a book (Hayles, 2002)

Orality and textuality are intertwined and cannot be discussed in isolation.

Afrikan humanism. As a concept coined by Rafapa (2010), Afrikan humanism refers to the African way of doing things. It is a philosophy that propagates African thinking, values and systems that were passed on from one generation to the next by word of mouth.

African culture. African culture is African tradition, the African way of living. Africans look after each other in all respects, which is demonstrated during celebrations and in times of sorrow. They volunteer their services as a way of supporting the family hosting a celebration or experiencing sorrow.

In African culture “*motho ke motho ka batho*”,² which Lebese and Phiri (2012) says about the phrase:

South African socially constructed phrase explain more about the application of the Ubuntu concept at the community level on the day to day basis. Meaning that as human being it is not possible to live in isolation. Other human beings around you define the essence of your existence. (p. 59)

Therefore, people look out for each other. Irrespective of the occasion, neighbours will come in and assist in whatever way is needed to prepare for the day. This lies in stark contrast with the Eurocentric approach to Western traditions, in which there is a tendency for people to be more self-serving than showing concern for others. This is evidenced in Mphahlele’s novel which reveals that in the cities no one is a sister or brother to another. The church teaches that all people are equal in the eyes of the Lord, but this is seldom put into practice in the real world, where Black and White people are often reluctant to accept each other as human beings. The Eurocentric approach alienates African people from their Africanness.

African philosophy. African philosophy is the belief that the community of Africans cultivate; it is a kind of world view for Africans. For example, Africans believe that when their people die, their spirits live on, and become their ancestors. Africans believe that there is a

² *Motho ke motho ka batho* – A person is a person through other people (literal translation).

strong connection between the living and the dead, hence the performance of *mophaso*,³ a ritual which requires the ancestors to be informed of the family situation, and to request their assistance in whatever challenges they are facing. African philosophy is subordinate to African religion and consists of certain beliefs and values that all African people share (Hallen, 2002).

Higgs and Smith (2006, p. 87) made a distinction between the academic and traditional concept of African philosophy, pointing out that in an academic sense, philosophy is a theoretical discipline, as is physics, algebra and linguistics, with its own distinctive problems and methods, whereas in a traditional sense, it is concerned with traditional African worldviews. For this study, the latter view – philosophy in the traditional sense – was considered.

Self-identity. Self-identity is about knowing oneself and where one comes from. Africans identify themselves through totems and praise poetry. Totems are animals that Africans identify themselves with and, according to African tradition, it is taboo to kill or eat that animal.

Indigenous knowledge. This is the knowledge that is unique to Africans, e.g. knowledge of herbal medicines and first aid. Since Africans were historically not a learned community, they were unable to read and write, and knowledge was passed on from one generation to the next orally and through imitation. As there were no Western doctors, Africans knew what to do when bitten by a snake, or which medicine to administer for ailments such as diarrhoea. This indigenous knowledge was indispensable to Africans in the event of emergencies.

Afrocentric approach. An Afrocentric approach focuses on African cultures and traditions and promotes African theory that deals with African philosophy. An Afrocentric

³ *Mophaso* – a ritual performed to inform the ancestors of the developments in the family.

approach is viewed as an approach that studies African cultures and traditions of Africans as subjects of their own destiny.

Conclusion

This marks the end of Chapter One, which focused on explaining the terminology that would be used throughout the study. The terminology will assist the reader in understanding the aspects of folklore as outlined in the study, including the fact that folklore is not oral literature, but that oral literature is part of folklore. The terminology highlighted in this chapter assisted the researcher in unpacking the influence of folklore on the selected authors.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This chapter presents a review of the literature on the study, to establish what other scholars have written on the relationship between orality and textuality. The chapter starts out by exploring different aspects of folklore and gives an overview of folklore as a concept. Secondly, it examines the theory from orality to scribality, whereby the influences of orality in the writings of the four selected African authors, whose works were written in a foreign language, are investigated.

Orality and Textuality

Orality and textuality are an integral part of folklore in that folklore is made known and is transferred from one generation to the next through orality (Seymour-Smith, 1986; Mashige, 2002). Folklore knowledge is not only transferred orally but in writing as well, through African literature, which includes novels, drama, poetry and short stories.

Khunwane (2011) argued that textuality and orality were interrelated in that whatever has been written down started as oral knowledge at some stage. Oral literature cannot be separated from written literature; the two complement each other. Seddon (2008) supported this view:

Research into orature worldwide has overturned the notion of a great divide between voiced and printed words. The recognition of what Brown calls the “often artificial separation of oral and literature forms,” however, should not allow a blurring of specificities of medium or ignore the “transformative power of orality on literate discourses. (p. 145)

Ong (1982) also argued that although one may speak of “oral literacy” today, “oral tradition” came first. This means that orality, which is a feature of folklore, existed long before textuality.

Folklore

Folklore, as defined in Chapter 1, has four distinguishable elements which the British Columbia Folklore Society (BCFS) differentiates as:

- Social customs: marriage customs, funeral customs, birthing rites and household celebrations
- Occupational folklore: blacksmithing, silviculture, navigation, architecture and farming
- Oral literature: folk tales, folksongs, ballads and chants
- Material culture: folk art, pottery, crafts and decorative ironwork

(The British Columbia Folklore Society, 2000)

Makgopa (2008) used the term “physical folklore” when referring to occupational folklore and material culture as physical folk life. According to the BCFS (2000) and Makgopa (2008), the material that has been developed for grade 10 to 12 in South African schools suggests that folklore comprises oral literature, without including the other aspects of folklore, i.e. social customs, occupational folklore and material culture.

Makgopa’s view of oral literature as one of the four aspects of folklore is illustrated in Figure 1, and embraces traditional prose and traditional poetry (Makgopa: 2008, p. 8).

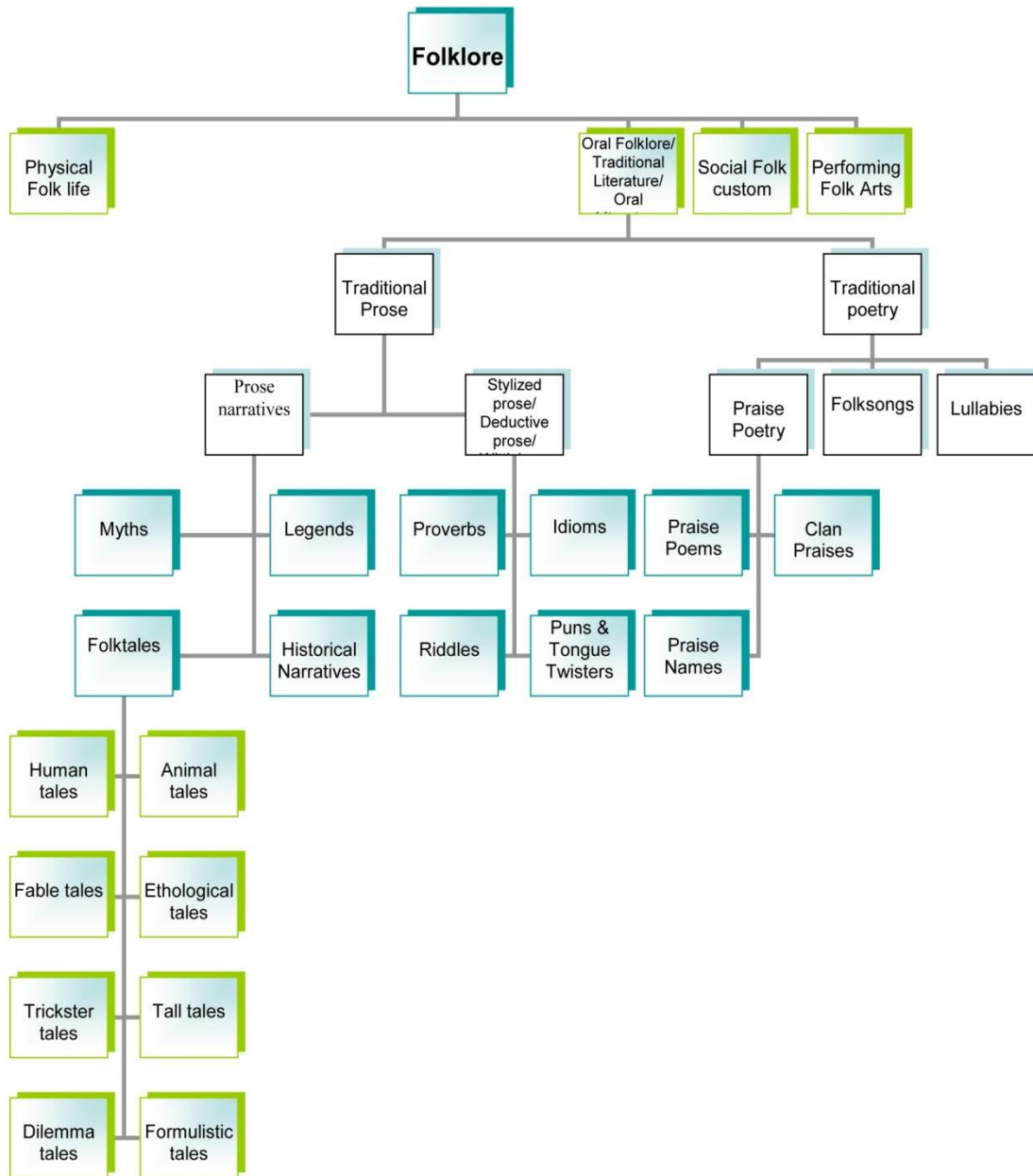


Figure 1. The elements of folklore

Afrikan Humanism

Afrikan Humanism refers to the African way of doing things. This theory attempts to explain the belief system that Africans adhere to, such as performing rituals within a particular community. An example is the death rituals among the Mapulana community in which a mixture of crushed seeds and water, together with snuff, are poured over the grave and the

older members of the family, often the eldest sister from the paternal family, would speak to the ancestors (Segodi, 2011). This ritual is common among Africans and is called *mophaso* in Northern Sotho. Rafapa (2007, p. 92) defined Afrikan Humanism as “the African way of living in which young and old continue to honour and evoke the elders even after they have passed away.” Evidence of communalism in his writings is an aspect of what is now known as Mphahlele’s concept of Afrikan Humanism (Rafapa, 2007).

Rafapa’s 2007 study, which was based on Mphahlele’s works, sought to find the link between orality and textuality. Rafapa (2007) continually referred to the ancestors, implying that ancestral connections were one of the many religious aspects of Mphahlele’s concept of Afrikan Humanism. Rafapa (2007) revealed the association between deceased relatives and the characters portrayed in Mphahlele’s writings. In this way, he used oral aspects, which were a link to dead relatives, in producing his writings. Rafapa (2007, p. 10) further emphasised that “Afrikan Humanism is a potent tool that could be used to analyse not only Mphahlele’s fiction, but any Afrocentric work by a postcolonial writer of fiction”.

Mphahlele’s view of Afrikan Humanism did not include the view that man could be saved, as it could not point to alternatives such as a promised land or the prospect of hell (Rafapa, 2010). Rafapa (2010) further indicated that in Afrikan Humanism, man’s present moral and spiritual life deserved attention and care, not the imaginary rewards or punishment in the future or some authority outside humanity that tried to censor and control man’s thoughts. According to Rafapa (2010), Afrikan Humanism refers to ancestral intervention in the life of a human being.

Jabu Pule, a South African soccer player had an encounter with his ancestors and believed that if rituals were not performed, his soccer career would come to an end:

Jabu supports the argument that there is a strong connection between the living and the living-dead. It is a fact that if one attempts to ignore the dead or run away from them

one would not be successful in life. Makgopa (2005: p. 65)

For Jabu Pule to continue to prosper in his career, the *mophaso* ritual had to be performed so that the living-dead could realise that they were not buried and forgotten, that they continued to live in absentia, and were still recognised as part of the family.

The *mophaso* ritual is conducted by pouring African beer, snuff and the blood of a slaughtered animal. Generally, a white chicken is used for performing this ritual, although a goat, sheep or bull can also be slaughtered, at a place that has been made specifically for ancestral worship in the family. The ancestral place of worship, called *thithikwane*⁴ (Figure 2) includes the triangular corner of a hoe protruding from the ground in the middle of the circle. During the ritual, the family pleads for forgiveness from the ancestors for any wrongdoing.



Figure 2. *Thithikwane* in Ramokako Village, outside Tzaneen, Mopani district of Limpopo Province (2 May 2014).

The ancestors can come to someone through a dream involving a conversation with the person who has passed on. This could be an interesting or a frightening conversation.

⁴ Thithikwane is a place for performing *mophaso*

According to African culture and tradition, if people dream about their ancestors, it means the ancestors want to tell them or warn them against something. Dreams are important in African cultures, even when they are not about deceased relatives. This is evidenced by Mphaka's dream in Serudu's book, *Naga ga di etelane* (1977, p. 19), in which his mother instructed him to bring the children back home to Bonwatau before she could die. Mphaka had left his home place to escape the oppression of the authorities, and had not been back for a long time. His mother was afraid she would die without seeing her grandchildren; her ancestors heard her cry and visited her son. As an African who fully understands the African culture, Mphaka was fully aware of what could happen to him if he did not honour the message from his mother in the dream. This view was supported by Makgopa (2013):

As an African who fully comprehends the values and significance of African epistemology, Mphaka is fully aware of the repercussions of the utterances of the voice of his mother. (p. 120)

Rafapa (2007) continually referred to the ancestors, implying that ancestral connections were one of the many religious aspects of Mphahlele's concept of Afrikan Humanism. Rafapa indicated the connectedness with deceased relatives in the lives of the characters portrayed in Mphahlele's writings. According to Rafapa (2010, p. 29), Mphahlele "accepts religious authority as an ingredient of his philosophy of Afrikan Humanism because, rather than imposed, it is accessed both from the bottom and top via the ancestors and all nature pervaded by such Vital Force." The opposite is what Rafapa (2010, p. 28) called Christian humanism. These arguments suggest that ancestral beings are important in the lives of all human beings, whether Africans, Europeans, Indians, or Christians, etc. Hence the emergence of Zambian humanism, a socialist ideology, developed by Kenneth Kaunda, independent Zambia's first president, which characterises the distinctive personality of Africans found in Zambia, and

which is also a tool with which to shape their African identity in its passage towards the future (Rafapa, 2010).

Afrikan Humanism incorporates folklore, which starts from the known to the unknown, thus the four categories of folklore – oral literature, social customs, occupational folklore and material culture.

In contrast to African humanism is European Humanism which promotes the European way of doing things and the European lifestyle, thus the term, Eurocentrism. Africans have had their own way of doing things, e.g. farming, medicine and architecture, which were not written down or documented in books. Anything that is now documented in books started out as oral information. The reason for the failure to document African information is that the community was illiterate. Makgopa (2008) reiterated in his definition of the concept folklore, that it focuses much on the people's customs:

Folklore, therefore, refers to people's customs – any of those beliefs, customs and oral literary forms “common to man” passed from generation to generation by word of mouth. (p. 5)

Afrikan Humanism is rooted in African culture. Identity is also embedded in culture. Therefore, the two cannot be separated.

Self-Identity

Folklore defines one's identity. The former president of South Africa, Thabo Mbeki, in his speech, presented on May 8, 1996 on behalf of the ANC in Cape Town at the adoption of The Republic of South Africa Constitutional Bill, emphasised that he identified himself as an African, by repeatedly stating, “I am an African”. Mbeki's words were rooted in the knowledge that he was born of Africans, brave men and women of Africa. He stated that Africans were afraid to talk about their ancestors and to acknowledge who they really were (Mbeki, 1996).

Mashige (2004, p. 10) maintained that for Africans to add credibility to their society's image, they had to determine and define their own sense of self and cultural identity, i.e. knowing who they were and where they came from. Identity is crucial in the life of Africans and all people. According to Makgopa (2012),

Globally, identity is an essential component that serves as a foundation or building block of any society. Identity is always built on cultural understanding and realization of one's folklore. Failure to understand the social, economic, religious and political significance of one's folklore results in a total failure of understanding and knowing one's identity and culture. (p. 52)

Some clans identify themselves as lions, elephants, crocodiles, etc. depending on their paternal line. If the father is a lion, all the members of that family will identify themselves as lions, because they are the descendants of a lion. The mother will continue calling herself by her paternal totem because when she marries, the head still belongs to her parents; the in-laws marry the body only. Therefore, if she dies, the husband's family cannot prepare the burial without involving her parents. The head is not theirs; they only marry the body.

Khumbul'ekhaya, a weekly docu-reality series on the South African Broadcasting Corporation channel 1 (SABC 1), airs real stories of people seeking lost relatives or parents, so that they can be reunited and restore their self-identity (Hofmeyer H & Ferreira D. 2012).

People appearing on Khumbul'ekhaya usually experience challenges ranging from physical challenges to unemployment, and need to be introduced to their ancestors. They go to great lengths to locate their relatives, from either the mother's or the father's side. The programme assists them in locating their blood relatives so that the necessary rituals can be performed. As Africans, they believe that their ancestors are not at rest, and will not rest, until they are reunited and rituals are performed in which they are introduced to the family as one of

their own. Once re-united with their long lost families, their problems become a thing of the past. Most of them, after being introduced, resolve their challenges and have peace of mind because now they know who to turn to in the event that they experience challenges that need ancestral intervention. According to Makgopa (2008), no society will survive if it does not know its roots, a view echoed by Mashige (2004) who said:

Stripped of identity, it becomes impossible for Africans to know themselves either as cultural or political beings because their cultures and history have been mutilated and/or eroded. Arising from this is a belief that, in order to give content to their society's image, Africans have to determine and define their own self and cultural identity since culture is a repository of all the values that have been evolved by different social strata in that society over time (p. 10).

African authors who use a foreign language to express their opinions, ideas and experiences cannot hide the fact that they are Africans. Traces of cultural practices and traditions are always visible in their writings. What they write about is not an experience but an inner feeling, a true identity of who they really are.

Social Customs

Circumcision.

Circumcision is seen as preparation for the road to manhood. An African boy would not engage in intimate relationships unless he had attended mountain school. For mountain school to take place, there had to be a boy from the royal family who was ready in terms of age to undergo the process, who would be the head boy for the class for that particular year. Sepota (2002, p. 46) stated: "It is normal practice that the young chief should always be the first in line of boys to be circumcised, which is a sign that he is a leader."

Circumcision takes place during winter when the weather conditions are cold. Wounds

heal more easily in these conditions because they are less likely to become septic. Once the initiates have endured the coldness of winter, they are regarded as men and take part in the activities of men in the communities in which they live.

Matsepe (2008) explained how women, realising that their sons were grown up and had started engaging in relationships, would complain to their husbands for the king to give them a hearing. The king was reluctant to do so because the boy in the royal family who was supposed to lead the initiation, was not of royal blood. However, once he had been initiated, he would be ready to become king after his father. Tradition dictated that the first born boy of the king, whose mother has been married by the cows from the community to come and bear them the future king, is to become king after the death of his father.

According to Matsepe (2008), if boys are not taught by men through initiation, the following will happen to the community:

*Mola le dikelago, ga go mosadi goba kgarebe le ge e le lethumaša le le ka yago felo.
Mola le dikelago, le woo a tshetšwego ke diphafana o swanetše go itota, go sego bjalo
o tla bona ka go fetša, gobane ke monna ofe yoo a ka hlwago a tšhungwa ke letšatši
kgorong a ahlola ditaba tša mašilo ao a sego a be a rutwa molao le maitshwaro?*

(Once the sun sets, there is no woman or young lady, even girls, who will roam about. Once the sun sets, even those that are intoxicated must look after themselves, otherwise they will see to finish, because there is no man who will sit at the *kgoro*⁵ in the sun, solving issues of imbeciles who have not been taught by men how to behave?) (p. 59)

Marriage. Marriage is a union between two families that binds man and woman to become husband and wife. Myburgh (1981, p. 93) defines marriage as “an institution through

⁵ *Kgoro* – the traditional court place at the royal kraal where community disputes are resolved.

which a man and a woman are united with the purpose of procreating children as the legitimate offspring of the parents”.

In an African cultural system, children are raised to one day become men and women who marry and have their own families. Boys would marry and stay with their parents in extended families, with the notion that once they have children, the children’s grandparents could help in raising them, while girls would marry and leave their parents to live with their husband and his family. Selepe (2007) explained how in Northern Sotho culture, daughters are raised up, they are raised up with the belief that they will eventually get married. They grow up with the knowledge that one day they will marry and leave for their own families too. In contrast to this, sons are raised to remain in the family and look after their parents within the sphere of their influence (Selepe, 2007).

Once the boys have been initiated, they are ready for marriage and negotiations begin between the bride and the groom’s families. The bride’s family announces the bride price and the two families negotiate until they reach an agreement. After the *‘lobola’* or *‘magadi’* as it is commonly known in Sesotho culture, has been settled, the groom’s family is ushered through and presented with a live animal, in the form of a goat or a sheep, to be slaughtered. A portion of the slaughtered animal is cooked by men and then shared among the men who were part of the negotiating team. The rest of the animal is taken to the groom’s family as a sign that everything concerning the negotiations went well (Selepe, 2007).

African cultures allow for men of high social standing – wealthy men and particularly those who occupy important positions in the community – to be married to more than one woman, known also as polygyny (Myburgh, 1981). Wealthy men believe that every African woman would want to be married to such a man. Non graduates or men who have not been initiated into manhood do not qualify. Mashige (2004) maintained that

In so far as identity concerns issues of language, tradition, and values, it concerns

culture. Culture can be defined as a symbolic system that mediates and regulates belief systems and relationships. It can be seen as unfinished presentation of meaning. (p. 6)

According to African cultures, it is proper for a man to marry as many wives as he can support so as to maintain the family line and the clan. The wealth of an African family is determined by how many children he has, whether girls or boys. Girls will be married and the father will receive their *magadi*,⁶ which will be used so that the boys can marry. The African family system comprises extended families living in a homestead. Culturally, the girl's place is the home where she helps in the household and the boy's place is in the fields looking after the cattle, and later at the *kgoro* to learn the man's responsibilities. These gendered roles are informed by cultural beliefs.

Having children is the pride of every African man, especially when having fathered a boy child. However, the girl child also brings happiness to the parents, as they will be married to other families and grow their husband's clan as well.

Magoši (kings) and *dingaka* (traditional healers) have been known to marry more than one wife. This would ensure that when a woman is in a state of cleansing and restricted from executing certain household duties, like when she is menstruating and cannot engage in sexual activity, then the other wives could perform those duties so that their husbands would still be looked after. If a wife does not bear children, divorce is not an option, but her husband is allowed to marry another woman. If the wife is no longer able to sexually satisfy her husband, the wife may request her husband to marry a younger wife, preferably her younger sister, referred to as sororal polygyny.

⁶ *Magadi* – a set amount paid by the husband to the bride's family.

Sororal polygyny is defined by Seymour-Smith (1986, p. 264) as “a form of polygyny where the co-wives are sisters”. This translates to direct sisters – two sisters from the same mother being married to one man. This, according to African cultures, is totally acceptable and appropriate in that the one sister will be able to take care of the other sister’s children should she die (Seymour-Smith, 1986).

According to Kuper (1986), marriage, especially Swazi marriage, is a linking of two families rather than of two individuals, although it is common to all African cultures. The rationale is that should the man die, one of his brothers will have to take over the responsibility of raising his children, and ensuring that his wife is taken care of in all respects (Kuper, 1986).

Similarly, it is also important in case the wife dies or becomes barren, as divorce is not an option in African culture. This is supported by the proverb that says ‘*lebitla la mosadi ke bogadi*’⁷ – the family will provide the man with a younger full sister, a sister from the same mother, to take care of her sisters’ children, or to bear children for her and raise them in the man’s name.

Mophaso⁸. *Mophaso* ritual is an important African custom. In almost every situation within the family, whether good or bad, a *mophaso* has to be performed as a way of informing the ancestors. When a child is born, a ritual to inform the ancestors that there is a new soul in the family has to be performed. When someone in the family dies, a *mophaso* ritual is performed to inform the ancestors to welcome him or her to where they are. If something is not going well in the life of one family member, a *mophaso* ritual to ask them to look after that person is performed.

⁷ *Lebitla la mosadi ke bogadi*: literally translated as ‘the grave of a woman is in her in laws’, which means that once a woman is married, when she dies she has to be buried with her in-laws.

⁸ *Mophaso* is a ritual in African culture that is performed to appease the ancestors.

If someone in the family is not in good health, a ritual is performed to request them to take care of the person. According to Myburgh (1981, p. 134), rituals are performed: “to give thanks, to ensure that the spirits remain well disposed, or to placate them when they are displeased.”

When a ritual is to be performed, an animal such as a goat or a cow, is killed as an offering. When offering a goat, a black female is preferred as it is representative of the maternal spirit, and when offering a cow, the bull is preferred as it represents the paternal spirit. Snuff is made available and sorghum beer, preferably known as African beer, is prepared at such rituals. Cloete and Madadzhe (2005) stated that beer drinking is a common feature of the African tradition at special occasions such as initiation, marriage, and even funerals. They sing songs to unite and forget their differences and as they unite in worship, their requests reach the ears of their ancestors.

The ritual followed when a newborn is about to arrive in the family at an unexpected time involves using ‘*matlhatswaleselo*’ as opposed to the usual African beer, as this is an emergency.

The continued existence of these practices in some families indicates that there are Africans of different cultures who remain proud of their tradition, irrespective of the changes that are witnessed today.

During an emergency, *matlhatswaleselo*⁹ is quickly prepared so that the ancestors can be informed of the unforeseen occurrence. The ritual is performed very early in the morning and the belief is that the ancestors would have just woken up and would not yet have dispersed

⁹ *Matlhatswaleselo* – a mixture of water and a small amount of mielie meal that is prepared for performing *mophaso*.

for their different daily chores, when they would be able to call each other and converge to give their attention to the person performing the ritual.

The mixture is prepared by taking a *sego*,¹⁰ half filling it with water and then sprinkling mielie on top. In the absence of a *sego*, an ordinary calabash is used instead. Snuff, in its container, should always be ready at the place where the ritual is to be performed. Only the aged are eligible for the performance of the ritual, especially the grandmother, the grandfather, and the paternal aunt who is the sister to the father of the person for whom the ritual is to be performed. During the ritual, the other members of the family should observe so that should an emergency arise when the elderly are not available, they will be able to perform the ritual. The mother is also eligible to perform the ritual in the event that the elderly is not available, and should have knowledge of the paternal lineage of her husband's family.

For example, if a member of the family, perhaps a distant relative working in the city, heard of a work opportunity for someone back home, a ritual would have to be performed to inform all those departed souls that he is leaving for the city and that they should accompany and protect him in that venture. His grandmother would perform the ritual by calling on the husband, if already deceased, as he is the closest to her, and tell him that it is her, *Hunadi*¹¹ who is performing the ritual for the grandson or granddaughter. She would then call the other members of the family, her husband's brothers and sisters, and conclude by saying, "*le lena ka moka bao ke sa le tsebego*" which is translated as "and also you whom I don't know".

If the grandfather was performing the ritual, he would start by addressing his parents if they are already deceased; if not yet deceased, he would start with the deceased grandparents until the generation he is aware of and conclude by saying, "and also you whom I don't know".

¹⁰ *Sege* - a calabash with a handle that is used for drinking water and African beer

¹¹ *Hunadi* – A praise name for a woman

An example is:

“Agee, Hlabirwa ‘a Bauba ‘a Mphela ‘a Nape ‘a Monare!”

Here the grandfather is addressing five generations, by their praise names, from his recently deceased father, *Hlabirwa*. *Hlabirwa* is the son of *Bauba* who is the son of *Mphela*, *Mphela* is the son of *Nape* who is the son of *Monare*. He would recite their surname embracing the clan name, e.g. *Banareng ba gaLetsoalo*, where *Banareng* is a clan name for the people with the surname *Letsoalo*. During the performance, the person in the city who has called their son to work, if he is a member of the family, is also introduced to the ancestors by saying “*Phuti*, whom you know, who is the grandson of *Nape* whom you know, the son of *Monare*”. While doing the recitation, snuff is pinched and poured onto the ground where the ritual is performed, accompanied by the drinking and spitting of the water mixture.

During the process the problem is introduced and a request made to open the way for him, to walk with him and to protect him where he is going. When the person finally leaves, he is given something as a token that the grandfather loved very much to cling to it as a sign that he is with him all the way. It could be a cap or a wrist band that once belonged to the grandfather.

In Northern Sotho culture, *‘kgomo e gapša le namane’*, meaning, if a man marries a woman who already has a child, that child will be introduced to the ancestors of the man. The introduction is done by means of performing a ritual. In this case, it is not an emergency and the occasion must be properly arranged and preparations made. A goat is made available, according to the information given by the traditional healer, whom they have consulted as tradition dictates, for example, to slaughter a black and white goat. African beer is also to be brewed in the home where the ritual is to be performed.

During the ritual, the child would be named after one of the uncles if it was a boy or one of the aunts if it was a girl, in the paternal lineage in which the mother is married, and the

child would then be addressed by that name. This kind of ritual requires the family to invite all the people in the father's lineage to come and form part of the celebration as they will be introducing the child to their ancestors and giving the child a new name by which he/she will be known thereafter.

Occupational Folklore

Farming. Africans made a living through either livestock or crop farming. Africans are subsistence farmers rather than commercial farmers, i.e. they do not farm for resale, but to be able to take care of their families. Livestock is the wealth of an African man and irrespective of how many cows, goats, sheep, or fowls he has, he will not slaughter them. Even if there is nothing to eat, children would rather mix porridge with water for dinner and add a little sugar to taste. The only time when there would be meat to feast is at Christmas time or when the livestock are drought-stricken and dying.

Performing Art

Performing art refers to acts that not everyone is able to perform. In this study, performances comprise witchcraft; music and dance; beading; carving and crafting. Performing art is an aspect of folklore as depicted in Makgopa's schematic representation in

Witchcraft. Witchcraft is an African art that plays a crucial part in the lives of Africans. It is considered an art because not everybody is able to practise it. Families that are renowned experts in witchcraft are proud of their status and have the assurance that other members of the community will not interfere with their lives because they are feared. However, they are the most hated people in the community because of their status.

There is a distinction between sorcery and witchcraft, which Lewis (1976) distinguishes as follows:

Sorcerers are people who employ magical spells, rites and medicines to achieve their fell ends. Their malevolent apparatus is tangible and external to themselves. Witches,

in contrast, do not need any of these aids; their power consists of their own innate psychic capacity to cause harm. Their weapon is malicious thought itself, not techniques which, in principle, can be detected and observed. (p. 71)

Peltzer (2002, p. 65) distinguished witchcraft from sorcery by stating that “among the Bapedi a distinction is made between ‘night *boloi*’ (witchcraft) and ‘day *boloi*’ (sorcery).”

Peltzer (2002) further indicated that:

Witchcraft of the day is practiced by people with negative disposition such as hatred and jealousy. They will then resort to witchcraft to take malevolent magical action against people they wish to harm and kill. The night witches, however, harm and kill because of an inherited compulsion to do so. (p. 65)

Witchcraft is an integral part of African people who are involved in practicing it. It is still practiced today and is passed on from generation to generation. Witchcraft is feared as it is a dangerous practice. Witchcraft is an African art which symbolises power, wisdom and the ability to protect anything that belongs to one, whether family, wealth or belongings. Bowie (2006) considered witchcraft as being “hot”; something that needed to be “cooled”, in the sense that if one were healthy, wise and successful, one would be a victim of witchcraft because of jealousy. This made the wealthy fearful of those who were less prosperous because of the power of their jealousy. Disease, death, a poor harvest, disease among the cattle, etc., are often ascribed to activities of witches and sorcerers (Myburgh, 1981, p. 120).

Dance and Music. Dance and music are an African art form that is part of oral literature. When people sing they also dance to the rhythm of the beat. Some traditional music and dance carries a particular meaning while others serve to communicate specific information.

Some songs are used for healing purposes, e.g. traditional healers have dance and song

sessions to communicate specific information about the healing.

Oral Literature

Oral literature is one of the most prevalent aspects of folklore in the lives of Africans and comprises of traditional prose and traditional poetry. Traditional prose includes prose narratives in the form of folk narratives or tales and stylised prose in the form of proverbs, idioms and riddles. Traditional poetry, in the form of praise poetry, incorporates praise poems, praise names and clan praises. The African community uses oral literature to teach their children good manners and the African way of life in which elderly people are respected irrespective of whether they are family. Every adult is given the same respect as a mother, father, grandfather or grandmother. Proverbs and idioms are a way of curbing bad behaviour in African culture.

Traditional Healers

Traditional healers offer protection from witchcraft. These African doctors know which herbs are suitable for healing different diseases. They still play a significant role with respect to diseases that Western doctors are unable to heal because they are not recorded in medical books. For example, when a person has been bewitched, Western doctors will not be of any assistance. Traditional healers do not need to attend medical school, but rather acquire indigenous knowledge and are initiated to become traditional healers. During the initiation, they are taught about the different types of herbs used as medicine for healing different diseases.

Traditional healers are important in the lives of Africans. Their work covers a wide range of areas from healing different illnesses, to protecting people from being bewitched, helping to return curses to the sender, to helping in strengthening and protecting households from becoming a playground for witches. Nowadays, they even use herbs and medicine to help criminals to hide from the police when they have committed a crime. Some Africans are

reluctant to consult with traditional healers, also known as witch doctors, because they believe their work is to bewitch and not to heal.

Traditional healers differ from practice to practice, as do Western doctors, and have different areas of speciality in their practices. Some are general practitioners, some specialise in children's illnesses, and some in ancestral illnesses. Herbalists have a specialised knowledge of herbs, but do not diagnose the problem; rather, they rely on the patient to tell what the problem is and then they will provide the necessary herbs.

Amongst these, are traditional healers who throw bones to diagnose a problem and others who are visited by the ancestors to diagnose the problem. Figure 3 is a photograph of initiates in the process of becoming traditional healers. They are walking in the river on their knees, one of the processes they have to undergo during their initiation to become traditional healers.



Figure 3. Traditional healing initiates in Marumofase Village in the Greater Tzaneen Municipality of Mopani District, Limpopo (June 26, 2012)

Traditional healing is considered to be a calling and not something a person can just decide to do. The calling comes by way of illness or a visit from the ancestors in a dream instructing a person to answer the calling. In most instances, it happens because one of the deceased relatives was a traditional healer and the ancestors want the calling to continue into the next generation. When a family consults a traditional healer about a family member's illness, they will be told during the diagnosis that the ancestors are not at peace and want the patient to be initiated. Once agreement has been reached, the patient will go through the initiation process.

They can then graduate to become a traditional healer who uses bones to diagnose a patient's illness. Once they have graduated, and start practising as traditional healers in the designated places in their households, they are totally healed from the illness as they agreed to the calling. They prepare a separate room in their household which they believe is an ancestral place. Not everybody has access to this place. Once they qualify to practise, they can diagnose using the bones of the dead (Figure4).



Figure 4. Traditional healer throwing bones at Serare Village of gaMaake area of the Greater Tzaneen Municipality of Mopani District, Limpopo (September 18, 2012).

As the bones and shells are scattered on the mat, the traditional healer will speak to them during the diagnosis. He/she will then ask the ancestors to reveal the diagnosis and can then tell by the way the bones fell, depending on whether they are facing the north or south, east or west. This study focused only on traditional healers who throw the bones and those who have a knowledge of herbs.

A newborn baby who is born with an illness called *lekone* or *hlogwana*¹² would be taken to a traditional healer and would be healed using African *muti*¹³. These two illnesses are the most dangerous because if not treated or detected early, the child can die. Western medical doctors are not able to cure these illnesses because they are not recorded in their medical books.

Any person, young or old, can ease an unsettled stomach, by swallowing saliva produced after chewing a root called *serokolo*¹⁴. The bark of some trees is used as *muti* for certain ailments. Some African people choose not to go to medical doctors when they are ill because they believe that traditional healers can help them, as their great grandparents relied on traditional healers who would give them medicine to prepare at home and drink. They believe in using herbs and are healed. Marijuana may be used for healing ear ache by soaking dried marijuana leaves in a clean cloth which, once well-soaked, would be squeezed in the aching ear to stop the ache.

Figure5 is a photograph of unprocessed *muti*, not yet ready for storage. It is unprocessed *muti* in the form of roots, barks and leaves of identified wild plants. These *muti* is placed in the sun to dry out so that it can be grinded.

¹² *Lekone/hlogwana* – children's illnesses that can only be cured using African *muti*.

¹³ *Muti* – African medicine made from herbs.

¹⁴ *Serokolo* – a medicinal herb, calamus.



Figure 5. Unprocessed *muti*. Photographed at Sedawa Village, gaMametja area of Maruleng Municipality of Mopani District, Limpopo (May 18, 2012)

‘*Muti*’ may be hung on the outside of the medicine house to preserve it. Hanging the ‘*muti*’ on the outside may appear unsafe, but children will not go anywhere near it as they are taught that the place is sacred. The hut that becomes the medicine-house serves as a storage place and a consulting room at the same time. When entering the hut, patients remove their shoes to show their respect, as it is considered a sacred place for the ancestors or ancestral spirits.



Figure 6. Unprocessed *muti* hanging outside a medicine house in Sedawa Village, gaMametja area in the Maruleng Municipality of Mopani District, Limpopo (May 18, 2012)

The *muti* in figure 6 would be ground and sifted once it has dried out completely, before being stored in prepared utensils such as those shown in as in Figure7.



Figure 7. Processed *muti* in containers at Ramokako Village, in the Greater Tzaneen Municipality of Mopani District, Limpopo (May 2, 2014)

As indicated in Figure7, the different utensils enable the traditional healer to identify which medicine should be used for curing or healing which different diseases. These containers are well known to the healer, even if not labelled, so there is no confusion about which *muti* to give the patient.

Indigenous Knowledge Systems

Indigenous knowledge is a way of living, defining day-to-day activities such as hunting, cultivation, fishing, farming and health systems. This type of knowledge evolves with time to adapt to changes in the environment. It is specific to each society and is transmitted from generation to generation (Rankoana, 2012). This definition of indigenous knowledge systems

(IKS) indicates that indigenous knowledge is actually African philosophy that translates to folklore. One does not need to go to school to learn about this knowledge; it is acquired through imitation from other members of the family or community.

The four categories of folklore, namely, physical folk life, Oral literature, social customs and performing art, try to bring an understanding of IKS, which may also be regarded as folklore, as it is also transmitted orally, or through imitation.

According to Rankoana (2012), IKS is knowledge that is embedded within community practices, traditions, customs and social interactions, which is communicated orally, and through socialisation by observation and demonstrations.

Therefore, Afrikan Humanism, African philosophy, folklore and IKS are terms used to describe orally transmitted knowledge that has not been documented or written down anywhere in the literature. This knowledge brought about oral tradition. The only form of education for Africans was through oral tradition until the arrival of the missionaries who brought textual tradition with them.

Conclusion

This Chapter provided a detailed presentation of folklore, highlighting different aspects of folklore from existing literature. It showed that orality and textuality are interwoven and form part of folklore. The literature review points mostly to aspects of folklore as cultural practices and customs. Afrikan Humanism was reviewed as a theory that conceptualises African identity and as it relates to folklore. The literature underlined that African humanism is facilitated through folklore in the form of orally transmitted knowledge and transferred to written knowledge.

Chapter 3: Research Design and Methodology

This chapter describes the research design and methodology used to address the study aims and research questions. The chapter gives detailed descriptions of the research methods and the theoretical framework within which the data was analysed.

Qualitative Research Design

Qualitative research design allows the researcher to focus on the description and interpretation of experiences from the perspectives of the research population (Flick, 2009). This design involves an in-depth enquiry into research questions or problems to obtain a meaningful and comprehensive understanding based on the perspectives of the research subjects (Flick, 2009). It is descriptive and interpretative in nature, and takes the form of word analysis rather than numerical analysis of data. Qualitative research has been used effectively to study culture as cultural systems of meaning, including values, morals, traditions and customs, are subjectively and socially constructed (Flick, 2009).

This study opted to use a qualitative research design as it focused on document analysis to acquire an in-depth understanding of the elements of folklore contained in the four selected novels by African authors, and to examine the extent to which the authors were influenced by their social and cultural backgrounds. Qualitative research is structured into different research designs: phenomenological, grounded theory, ethnographic, historical, action research studies, case study and content analysis.

Phenomenological studies. Here the focus is on understanding human experiences as described by the research participants. Their descriptions of their experiences are referred to as lived experiences. Data is usually collected through interviews (Babbie & Mouton, 2001).

Grounded theory studies. This is a qualitative research design that focuses on developing a theory to explain occurrences (Babbie & Mouton, 2001). Data is collected in the form of participant interviews and observations and analysed to develop a theory as grounded

in the data. Grounded theory was founded by two sociologists, Glaser and Strauss (1967), who believed that theory generation is more critical than theory testing as used in quantitative research (De Vos & Van Zyl, 1998). In grounded theory, testing a hypothesis is not as important as generating a theory to help understand a phenomenon under study and thereby develop new knowledge (De Vos & Van Zyl, 1998).

Ethnographic studies. This type of study focuses on understanding cultural groups and was founded within the discipline of anthropology (Babbie & Mouton, 2001). Ethnographers are expected to spend a considerable amount of time with the people they are studying, long enough to become acculturated to understand their point of view. Data is collected through participant observations and interviews with key informants, i.e. people who know the culture being studied (Babbie & Mouton, 2001).

Historical studies. Historical studies are mainly concerned with identifying, locating, evaluating and synthesising data from the past (Babbie & Mouton, 2001). Data is collected through documents, relics and artefacts and can be classified as primary or secondary sources of data. Primary sources of data provide first-hand information while secondary data relies on second-hand information (Babbie & Mouton, 2001).

Action research study. This is a research approach that involves identifying or diagnosing a problem situation, planning action steps and implementing and evaluating the outcomes (Babbie & Mouton, 2001). The main premise in action research is to bring about a change within a community or population under study (Babbie & Mouton, 2001). Data is collected in collaboration with the participants and the research process actively engages the participants from study design through to implementation and evaluation (Babbie & Mouton, 2001).

Case study. A case study involves an in-depth investigation of a single entity (Babbie & Mouton, 2001). The researcher focuses on the interaction of the entity under study within its context. The study entity may be an individual person, a community, a family, or a country (Babbie & Mouton, 2001).

Content analysis. This research method is often specified as a research design (Williams, 2007), particularly when working with document analysis. This research study used content analysis. According to Williams (2007), content analysis involves identifying the body of material to be studied and defining the characteristics or qualities to be examined, which is what this study intended to do and has achieved.

Sampling

Sampling refers to the selection process of a smaller group from the total population under study. This smaller group or subset of the population is called the sample and knowledge obtained from the subset is considered to be representative of the population (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2003). However, qualitative research may not generalise findings from a sample to the population, given the nature of the research design and the sampling methods usually used. Qualitative research usually focuses on a small sample size with the aim of gaining an in-depth understanding of the research problem/question (Welman & Kruger, 2001). Quantitative research, on the other hand, allows for generalisations about the population under study due to the large sample size and the use of random sampling where any member of the population under study has an equal chance of being included in the study (Welman & Kruger, 2001).

Purposive sampling is one of the more commonly used non-random sampling methods in qualitative research. Non-probability sampling is the process of sampling in which some members of the study population have no chance of being selected to take part in the study (Welman & Kruger, 2001). Using purposive sampling as a non-random sampling method, the

researcher could purposively select certain cases or members of the population to participate in the study based on their knowledge, experience and personal judgement (Welman & Kruger, 2001). Purposive sampling was used to select the four books written in English by renowned African authors, one from Nigeria, one from Kenya and two from South Africa. Nigeria is in West Africa, Kenya in East Africa and South Africa in the South of Africa. The Northern part of Africa is left out due to the nature of their religion.

Gender consideration was also taken into cognisance, to include women writers in the sample. Women who are writing about tradition, culture, beliefs and customs of the African identity are rare to find, thus the male writers were considered as the sample for the study.

Unit of analysis

Unit of analysis refers to the key entity under study, i.e. what or who is being studied (Babbie & Mouton, 2001). The units of analysis in research studies usually include, but are not limited to: individuals, organisations, institutions and groups; social artefacts or cultural objects (books, photographs, newspapers); geographical units (towns, census tracts, states); social interactions (weddings, divorces, arrests, stokvels) and interventions (Babbie & Mouton, 2001). The units of analysis for this research study were four selected books, each written in English by an African author.

Theoretical Framework

The Afrocentric paradigm is a framework that evolved from the concept of Afrocentricity coined by Asante (1987), to promote the need for African people to be historically, economically, socially and politically repositioned (Mkabela, 2005). According to Asante (2014), Afrocentricity is a theory of change that supports repositioning African people from being subjects to becoming active agents, to understand African people within their social, political, and economic context.

Afrocentricity examines the topics with a view to regarding African people as subjects

of historical experiences and not as objects. It seeks to relocate the African person as an agent in human history in an effort to eliminate the illusion of their fringes. Afrocentricity as a pan-African idea is fundamental to the revival and survival of the African culture through proper education of African children (Mkabela, 2005). Afrocentricity is a methodology that operates within African essence and understanding enforcing into practice the principles, methods, concepts and ideas derived from our own African cultural experiences (Pellerin, 2012).

This study was an interdisciplinary study that sought to demonstrate the connection between folklore and Western literature. The study, therefore, sought to illustrate the synergy between folklore and its use in Western literature. The theory of Afrocentricity is key to understanding the connection between folklore as an African phenomenon and how it is used in Western literature. Eurocentricity cannot be used to study African philosophy and African culture as it is purely for European culture and tradition. Afrocentricity as a theory is key in showing the significant role African philosophy plays in the thinking of African authors and their writing. African authors write about what commands their way of living, i.e. their traditions, culture, beliefs and customs (Pellerin, 2012). Afrocentricity as a theory assisted in delimiting this study to only those aspects that were key to studying folklore, i.e. Social customs; Occupational folk life; Oral literature and Performing art (Pellerin, 2012).

The Afrocentric paradigm therefore affords a platform to understand African phenomena within its context and values the cultural and traditional history of African subjects (Asante, 2002). The Afrocentric paradigm seeks to position research from an African perspective, and facilitate the interpretation of research data from an African viewpoint. It conveys the significance of the researcher's familiarity with the indigenous language, history, myths and cultural practices of the research subjects (Mkabela, 2005). The researcher chose an Afrocentric approach for the characteristics highlighted above; to study and understand folklore as it has emerged from the four selected books written by African authors.

Data Analysis

A hermeneutic approach was selected as an appropriate research method of analysis for this study, given that the objective was to describe and interpret aspects of folklore used in the selected books and how the use of these aspects of folklore may have been influenced by the authors' social and cultural contexts.

The hermeneutic method is defined as the process of interpreting text (Flick, 2009). It has been used traditionally in biblical analysis for the purpose of identifying the meaning and intent of biblical scriptures (Van Zweek, Paterson, & Pentland, 2008) and recently evolved into various fields of study to address an array of research questions (Rennie, 2012).

Hermeneutics involves the science of interpretation (van Zweek, et al., 2008), not only of written text but also oral text (Rennie, 2012). It focuses on individuals' experiences of the world and how they view their experiences as narrated through their life stories (Kafle, 2011). Hermeneutics affords the researcher an opportunity to develop empathy with the text to allow an in-depth understanding of what the text means or its intent (van Zweek, et al., 2008).

To analyse the text, I firstly read and re-read each of the four selected books to familiarise myself with the content and create storylines for each book (Chapter 4). Dey (1993), argued that this first step is important for the researcher to gain an in-depth overall understanding of the data. Secondly, I read through each book to start identifying aspects of folklore used in the books. The second step involved reducing the data by extracting aspects of folklore identified in the books as outlined by the British Columbia Folklore Society (2000) and as presented by Makgopa (2008): Social customs; Physical folk life; Oral literature and Performing arts. The next step involved comparing and contrasting the extracted aspects of folklore across the four books. The extracted texts/data were then described and interpreted using the hermeneutic method guided by the research aim.

Conclusion

In research that involves African people as subjects, an Afrocentric approach becomes a tool for studying African cultures and traditions. This study employed an Afrocentric approach as the study involved African folklore contained in the four selected books by African authors. The findings would be valid and reliable as the study was conducted from an African perspective, unlike when using a Eurocentric approach which is not appropriate for African people when studying African cultures and traditions.

Chapter 4: Storylines

The storylines of the four books selected for this thesis are presented in this chapter as a foundation for the aspects of folklore discussed in subsequent chapters.

***Lonely Hearts* by Andrew Nkadimeng 2004**

This novel tells the story of Mazwi who is married to Hunadi. They have two sons, Jabulani and Malope. Jabulani, the elder son, attends the mountain school while Malope is in Grade 10 at a formal school in the Batau tribe of Mashite Village. While Mazwi and his son Malope were walking, he showed his son smoke coming from behind the mountain, where Jabulani's initiation school was located. He told him that he would go there one day, but Malope refused, saying that there was no need for him to attend the other school as he was already in Grade 10.

When Jabulani graduated from the mountain school, his family prepared for a welcoming ceremony. Women brewed African beer and cows were slaughtered in preparation for the big day. Rituals were performed to welcome him home, including bestowing on Jabulani his grandfather's praise name, Ngwato. From that day, he was no longer to be called Jabulani but Ngwato. After the ceremony, Jabulani was deemed to have become a man.

When Mazwi married his second wife, Pebetse, Hunadi took on the role of chief negotiator in Mazwi and Pebetse's marriage. Over time, Pebetse influenced Mazwi to neglect and abuse Hunadi. He moved the cattle from Hunadi's kraal to Pebetse's kraal, leaving Hunadi and her two sons with nothing.

Pebetse started to disrespect Hunadi, claiming that Mazwi loved her and her daughter Dikeledi, who was not Mazwi's biological daughter. However, Mazwi started sexually abusing Dikeledi who was afraid to tell her mother because they depended on Mazwi.

Meanwhile, Malope was faced with unwelcome amorous advances from his teacher, Dineo. Despite her threats to fail him if he did not reciprocate, Malope did not concede because

of her position as his teacher and her age. Dineo started ill-treating Lolo, who was Malope's girlfriend, but still she did not succeed in separating them. Later, Mazwi fell in love with Dineo.

Tired of the oppressed life Malope was living with Lolo, he fled with her to Zimbabwe, where they continued with their studies. Lolo studied Economic Sciences while Malope studied Human and Social Sciences. On their return to South Africa, Malope and Lolo campaigned for a free, democratic and non-racial society. They became the first Black leaders to rule a non-racial, non-sexist democratic government based on democratic values.

***Down Second Avenue* by Es'kia Mphahlele (1959)**

Es'kia Mphahlele's autobiography, *Down Second Avenue*, tells the story of his life in the village of Maupaneng, at gaMphahlele outside Pietersburg - known today as Polokwane. Having suffered at the hands of a neglectful father while living in Marabastad, a township outside Pretoria - also called Tshwane, Es'kia and his two siblings were taken to Maupaneng to stay with their paternal grandparents.

Es'kia's mother remained in Marabastad, working as a dressmaker for an African tailor. When her contract ended, she continued working from home, mending people's clothes and brewing African beer to make ends meet. While their father continued to ignore them, Es'kia's mother worked hard to provide for her children in Maupaneng, sending them food and clothes.

The children enjoyed life in Maupaneng. Es'kia, as the eldest of the three, took turns with a boy from a neighbouring family to take the goats and donkeys out to graze after school. When he and his friends played truant by bunking school, his grandmother would spank him, so that he would think twice before doing it again.

When their mother visited at Christmas, she found her children dirty and in tattered clothes as if she spent years without sending them clothes. Furious, she took them back with her to Marabastad, to their maternal grandparents in Second Avenue. Later, they moved to Fifth Avenue, to a one-roomed shack Es'kia shared with his mother, father, brother and sister. To

support her family, his mother started doing a White man's laundry. E'skia would help by collecting and delivering the laundry so that his mother could do it at home.

Because there were no water taps in Marabastad's yards, people had to draw water from a communal tap in the street. There they would gossip about almost everything happening in the area, including witchcraft, which was feared by most Black people. They gossiped about a tortoise that had been seen in the back yard of an old lady they suspected of being a witch because she was squint and ugly. Their suspicions were aroused after Aunt Dora's child became sick at the same time as they had seen the tortoise.

His father fled after he was arrested and fined for physically abusing his mother and was never seen again. His mother struggled to make ends meet and to be able to support her children. Despite the abuse that was taking place in his home, Es'kia persevered in his school work and succeeded in his studies to become a teacher. He taught at several schools but was not happy with the massive disparity between the salaries of Black and White people doing the same job. It was unheard of for a Black person to receive a higher salary than a White man, even if better qualified. Disillusioned by the ongoing inequity, E'skia resigned. He was awarded a teaching post at St. Peters which paid his salary from school funds because his status as a Black man did not allow him to receive the same salary as his White colleagues. He later became a journalist and editor of Drum magazine because of his involvement in politics.

He married Rebecca, also a teacher, who later studied to become a social worker, because she and her colleagues had been told that African teachers were training children to become slaves. Discouraged by the politics of the country, Es'kia decided to emigrate. He applied for a passport and went through several screening processes but was rejected. He was summoned to the Chief's office to explain his reasons for wanting to leave the country. He approached an African minister of the Dutch Reformed church, who convinced the Chief Officer of the Department of Native Affairs to allow him to leave, failing which he would

become a Communist. The Chief granted him his passport and he moved to Nigeria where he had secured a teaching post. However, his appointment was viewed with suspicion by the authorities who wanted to know how he had managed to secure a teaching post outside the country, who had helped him and who his referees were. He did not disclose everything.

Es'kia wanted his family to join him in Nigeria. They had to go through a similar screening process and their passports were also deliberately delayed. Their passports arrived on the eve of their departure, but had spelling errors that needed to be corrected before they could board the plane, delaying the flight by an hour while their passports were amended. Es'kia and his family then lived happily and freely in a country in which he and his son were never asked to produce a pass for walking down the street. Despite this, he did not forget what it was like to be a South African.

Es'kia's book concludes by describing how different Nigeria and South Africa were from each other. Apart from the absence of pass laws in Nigeria and the sense of freedom in a foreign country, absent too was oppression of the poor by the wealthy that was all too familiar in his home country, a country where the poor were Black people who had to do all the dirty work like cleaning the streets, without being allowed to walk freely on those same streets, and where the wealthy were the Whites who were continually oppressing the working class.

For the first time, he felt free to stretch his arms and say what he was thinking. He felt that his children would receive an education that was worth something, rather than being taught to become slaves.

Things Fall Apart by Chinua Achebe (1958)

The story revolves around Okonkwo, son of Unoka. Unlike his father, who had died without a title and huge debt to the people of the village of Umoufia, Okonkwo was renowned for his hard work. He became even more famous after his victory wrestling over a man, known as Cat, who until then had been undefeated for seven years.

Okonkwo had three wives and eight children. The first wife was usually referred to as Nwoye's mother or Okonkwo's first wife, his second wife was Ekwefi, and his third was Ojiugo. He built each wife a hut where each lived with her children. Unlike his father, he was respected by every member of the community, which earned him a special place in the community.

One quiet night, Okonkwo heard the horn being blown and wondered what the emergency could be. The following day, upon gathering at the market place, the people were told about the killing of Ogbuefi's wife in Mbaino, one of Umoufia's nine neighbouring villages. Umoufia was feared by all its neighbours, which would try to reach a peaceful settlement rather than go to war.

As was custom, Mbaino had to give Umoufia a virgin and a boy and Okonkwo was tasked with fetching them. On his arrival at Mbaino, he was treated with great honour and respect, and two days later, went back with the virgin and the boy. The virgin was given to Ogbuefi as replacement for his wife and the boy, Ikemefuna, was left in the care of Okonkwo for three years, to be a slave, after which he would have to be killed. Ikemefuna was ill for three weeks because he feared being treated as a stranger, but recovered because of the care he received and soon overcame his fear. Okonkwo treated the boy as if he was his own son; he was loved deeply by Okonkwo's household, and ended up calling him father.

Just before the Week of Peace, Okonkwo beat his youngest wife for coming home late and leaving the children unattended. She had gone to plait her hair and had not returned early enough to prepare the children's food. It was a custom not to beat up anybody during the Week of Peace and because Okonkwo had broken the peace, he was punished by the priest of the earth goddess, Eseani, who ordered him to bring an offering of a she-goat, one hen, a length of cloth and a hundred cowries. He did as he was told and also brought a pot of palm-wine.

After the Week of Peace, he took Nwoye, his son and Ikemefuna to prepare the seeds.

Some days later, when the land had been moistened by rain, they went to the farm and the planting began. Okonkwo had borrowed some seeds and had promised to return them after the harvest. The farms were struck by a severe drought, followed by persistent rain. During the time of rains, children would gather around fires and listen to stories being told.

Before the celebrations for the Feast of the New Yam, the villagers would empty the pots of old yams and dispose of them so that when they started the new year, everything would have been cleaned, including pots, calabashes, and the walls of the houses, and they would give thanks to their goddess. They would celebrate the New Yam Festival which was regarded as an occasion for joy throughout Umoufia, and a man with a strong arm, who got more returns from the ploughing fields, was expected to invite a large number of guests from far and wide. The second day of a new year was the day of wrestling and everybody in Umoufia was eager to watch it. Okonkwo won his second wife by beating Cat at one of these festivals. Okonkwo's wives prepared food for their families because they knew that after the festival it would be too late for them to do the cooking.

The whole village gathered around the playground leaving a circle in the middle for wrestlers. Behind a crowd of spectators was a huge and ancient silk-cotton tree which was sacred, and was believed to house the spirits of good children waiting to be born. Women who desired to have children would sit under it on ordinary days. Three men beat the drums while waiting for the wrestlers to arrive. Before the real wrestling, young boys of fifteen and sixteen from each team would fight to set the scene. Wrestling was popular entertainment in Umoufia. The last contest would be between the leaders of the two teams, Ikezue and Okafo. Okafo won the contest and the women praised him with a song accompanied by the clapping of hands.

Three years lapsed with Ikemefuna in Okonkwo's household, and the boy was told that he should be taken back home, when in fact, according to the custom, he was to be taken away by men and killed by Okonkwo. Before they set off, Ogbuefu went to Okonkwo and told him

that he should not be the one to kill the boy because the boy trusted him as a father. While on the way, the boy wondered if he would find his mother still alive, and his little sister who had been three when he left and was now six. While walking, one of the men struck him, and Okonkwo, not wishing to be seen as a coward, killed him. When Okonkwo arrived home that evening, his son Nwoye, who had regarded Ikemefuna as his brother, saw his father's face, and knew that his brother had been killed. This had all taken place during the season of rest between the harvest and the next planting season, and so there was nothing to keep Okonkwo busy and take his mind off the boy. The incident continued to play on his mind until Obierika, his friend, invited him to the marriage negotiations for his son.

Okonkwo was a man of action, but during this season, in the absence of work, talking was his speciality. They talked about why a drum was not beaten to tell the whole of Umoufia about Ogbuefu Ndulue's death because he was the oldest man in Ire, one of Umoufia's nine neighbouring villages. The reason was that his wife had died after hearing of his death and, as was custom, his funeral was delayed until the wife had been buried. Okonkwo slept for the first time in three nights, but his sleep was interrupted by his wife, Ekwefu, telling him that his daughter Ezinma was deathly ill. He consulted the medicine-man to assist in healing his daughter.

Ezinma was one of the children who was born and died to be reborn. She was the only survivor of her mother's nine children. The medicine-man cured her by digging up her *iyi-uwa*, which is an Igbo mythology referring to a special kind of stone which forms the link between an *ogbanje* and the spirit world. Only when the *iyi-uwa* is found and destroyed the child would no longer die and be born again to the mother (Achebe, 1958). An *ogbanje* is believed to represent an evil spirit that causes a child to die and reborn to the same mother over and over until the *iyi-uwa* is found and destroyed (Achebe, 1958).

One night when Ekwefu was telling Ezinma stories, the priestess of Agbala, Chielo,

came and took Ezinma away. Her mother could not bear the thought of losing her only daughter and followed in their footsteps until the priestess disappeared with Ezinma into a dark cave. While still waiting for them to reappear, her husband, Okonkwo joined her and they both waited there until the early hours of the morning. The priestess took Ezinma back to her hut and placed her on the bed and walked away.

This took place on the same morning of Obierika's celebration of his daughter's ceremony when the dowries were paid. Everybody went to assist in Obierika's compound. When the young girls went to draw water, Ezinma saw them and remembered that they were going to help, and also took her pot and joined them. They celebrated until night fell and then took the bride with to go and spend seven market weeks with her husband's family. The following day, Ezeudu's death was announced. Okonkwo became fearful because the last time he had spoken to the man was when Ezeudu told him that he should not be the one killing Ikemefuna because he trusted him as a father. Preparations for the funeral were made and on the day of the funeral, while celebrating the funeral, Okonkwo's gun went off and fired on the dead man's son who was commemorating with his brother by dancing. Okonkwo had to flee his own land into his motherland, Mbanta, as was the custom, and would return after seven years as the crime had not been deliberate. The following day, his compound was destroyed by fire, the walls demolished and his animals slaughtered, not because the people had anything against Okonkwo, but because it was their custom. Even Obierika, Okonkwo's friend was there because they were doing the goddess's will.

In the motherland, Okonkwo was welcomed by his mother's younger brother, the only surviving member of his mother's siblings and the same man who had welcomed him when he had gone to bury his mother. He was no longer the Okonkwo people knew; with no work to do, all he could was to sit in a silent half-sleep and would think about how he was going to rebuild his compound in his fatherland, Umoufia. Mbanta was neither his, nor his children's

home.

Obierika paid him a visit two years after he had left Umoufia, to bring him the cowries from the sale of the yams that he had kept for him when he left Umoufia. Two years later, when he visited again, things were different and circumstances were not happy. Missionaries had occupied Umoufia, one of whom was Nwoye, Okonkwo's son, who denied that Okonkwo was his father. Unlike Okonkwo, many people welcomed the changes that came with the White men.

Seven years went by and Okonkwo returned to his fatherland. His son, Nwoye, who had joined the missionaries, had been killed. Okonkwo killed a messenger who went to the market place to tell the people who met there to disperse because their meeting was unlawful. After killing the messenger, he fled to a tree outside his compound and hanged himself. His kinsmen would not cut him from there, but strangers could. According to custom, he could also not be buried by his kinsmen but only by strangers. A man who was one of the greatest men of Umoufia was to be buried like a dog. The missionaries continued building schools and preaching the word of God.

***A Grain of Wheat* by Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o (2008)**

The author tells the story of Mugo, whose parents died when he was still very young. He was left in the care of a distant aunt, Waitherero, who had six married daughters who lived with their husbands and never visited. Waitherero who was a drunkard, did not care for Mugo and treated him so harshly that he once considered strangling her with his bare hands when she was sober. However, because she was old and always drunk, she ultimately died of old age and over drinking. Her daughters attended the funeral and after burying her, they acted as if they did not recognise Mugo, who was left alone to fend for himself.

Mugo survived by ploughing, planting and harvesting his crops. Warui, Wambui and Gikonyo visited him to appeal to him to join the revolutionary movement, stating that they

were just speaking on behalf of the party. Because he was not used to being visited, he became so frightened when he saw them coming to his house that his stomach churned and he had to rush to the toilet.

No one actually knew the origin of the movement, except that it could be traced back from the time when the White man came to the land, holding a book with two hands, saying it was the word of God. The White man had been, given a piece of land, put up a structure and called it the House of God where people could go for worship and sacrifice.

Kihika, the leader of the movement, was a short man with a strong voice that could move mountains and command thunder to fall from heaven. He was feared by all, including the White men who were in authority. A price was put on his head – anybody who could bring him in, dead or alive, was offered a large sum of money. Mugo told the District Officer where Kihika could be found. Kihika was captured and hanged in public after he refused to tell the White man the secrets of the forests. Mugo's conscience started eating away at him for betraying his friend and he was constantly looking over his shoulder. Kihika's execution did not frighten the members of the movement of which he had been a leader. Instead, the movement grew and remained strong with the men that Kihika had led from prison, and the guns and ammunition they had taken when the police had run away from the prison after seeing him enter the premises.

After Kihika's death, Gikonyo, who was married to Kihika's sister, Mumbi, was elected leader of the local branch of the movement. The movement planned a celebration to remember their fallen heroes, like Kihika, who had lost their lives in the fight for freedom. The delegation, headed by Gikonyo, went to Mugo's house to tell him about it and that they wanted him to be the speaker of the day. The actual purpose of their visit was to extract from Mugo the secrets of the movement, so that they could deal with the traitor who had sold them out to the authorities, but Mugo told them nothing. After leaving Mugo's house, Gikonyo turned back

and returned to Mugo's house as he sensed that Mugo would tell him what had actually happened on the day that Kihika had left and did not return.

Gikonyo was determined to apprehend the traitor who had sold out Kihika to the authorities. At home, his wife was waiting for him to talk about her child but Gikonyo was not willing to do so. Mumbi had had a child by Karanja, her husband's friend, while Gikonyo was being detained. At the time, he did not know whether or not her husband was still alive. Karanja worked at the Githima Library, dusting books, straightening them on the shelves and writing their labels.

The day of the celebration arrived. Mugo gave a speech as requested and it touched most of the audience. He talked about how they were taken to the quarries, and were made to dig day and night, so that they could reveal the secrets of the party, but they never did. He later descended the platform and ran to his hut, sobbing bitterly, because he had talked about missing things that he did not have – a home, mother, wife and children. All that was a lie to him because he did not have anything, and he knew inside that he had been lying. After exposing the secret that he had carried along all those years, he felt a heavy load being lifted from his shoulders. Mugo disappeared on that day and was never seen again.

At the celebration, Gikonyo broke his arm and was admitted to hospital. His mother and wife visited him almost daily, but he was still angry with Mumbi for having had a child with another man. As time went by, the hatred faded and he wanted to talk to his wife about rebuilding their family, but Mumbi indicated that they would engage in that conversation when he was out of hospital.

Conclusion

The storylines discussed in this chapter demonstrate the different cultural backgrounds of the four authors. These authors grew up in different African countries but had common cultural practices based on their upbringing. They had experienced common aspects of African

culture such as circumcision, marriage customs, rituals and farming. These elements were vividly portrayed in their books. This is a clear indication that African countries have common practices despite different geographical locations.

Chapter 5: A Comparative Analysis of Social Customs

The concept social customs as discussed in this chapter incorporates initiation, marriage, rituals and traditional gatherings. This chapter attempts to demonstrate how these elements of social customs have been used in the four selected novels, by adopting a comparative approach.

Initiation School/Circumcision

Initiation school is regarded as the most important aspect of African culture and practice. It is done in winter to allow the wounds to heal without the risk of becoming septic as would be the case in warmer weather. At initiation school boys are circumcised by cutting the foreskin off their penis to prevent them from contracting sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) in the future. It is a school that prepares young boys to become responsible adults; it prepares them for manhood through initiating them, by training them to endure hardships.

There are two types of initiation, *bodika*¹⁵ and *bogwera*¹⁶. The first initiation, *bodika*, qualifies the initiate to be called *legaola*¹⁷. Once graduated and qualified to be a *legaola* the graduate can then undergo *bogwera* and is then regarded as a man. A boy remains a *legaola* until the *bogwera* graduation (Phalane, 2017). Upon graduating, the *bodika* are welcomed home and smeared with a reddish cream as in Figure 8.

¹⁵ *Bodika* – the first initiation for preparing boys into responsible manhood.

¹⁶ *Bogwera* – the second initiation for men after the first initiation.

¹⁷ *Legaola* – a man who has undergone the *bodika* initiation only.



Figure 8. *Bodika initiates*. <https://www.google.com/search?q=initiation+school&client=mobilepsotest>

(Retrieved 14.11. 2018; 12:23)

According to Cloete and Madadzhe (2005), circumcision, whether for boys or girls, prepares young people for marriage. Young boys ranging from 11 to 16 years are being initiated, and it is difficult to believe that they would have been prepared for marriage when they come out of initiation schools. Judging by the appearance of their faces, it is clear that they are still at the tender age of being cared for by their parents. By the time these graduates are ready for marriage they will no longer remember anything about what they had been taught during their initiation at the circumcision school.

Many initiation schools nowadays are perceived as a means of making quick money. The owners of the initiation schools know that once the boys are there, their parents will have to cover the expenses incurred during their stay. Some are taken there unwillingly, and there have been cases where parents have withdrawn their children from the school as they had not been consulted when their children were taken for initiation. Such a situation would not have happened in the past as it was known that “*wa e bona o a hwa*” (*if you see it, you die*), which

means that once you find yourself there, there is no coming back. The only option would be to complete the process and graduate with the rest of the group even if they were not in the same age group. If a boy ran away, the traditional healers would confuse him with their herbs so that he would not remember anything he witnessed while there.

In the past, withdrawing a child would not have happened as traditional healers were responsible for ensuring that the children were protected in such a way that even a witch would think twice before attempting anything sinister.

In Nkadimeng's novel, *Lonely Hearts*, Mazwi had a conversation with his son, Malope, who was in Grade 10, saying that he wanted him one day to go to the mountain school from which the initiates were about to graduate. In five years' time, Malope would be 21 years old and would be regarded as old enough to be prepared for marriage.

Unlike the *bodika* initiation that takes place in the mountains in winter, in the South African context, when the weather conditions are extremely cold, *bogwera* initiation takes place during summer in the royal kraal when the weather conditions are warm because they have already proved themselves to be men. *Bogwera* initiates dress differently from the *bodika* in attire made of grass (Figure 9). The grass is picked and sown together specially for the occasion. They do not stay in the mountains as with the initial initiation, but walk down the village streets, and community members are allowed to go and watch them.

Though the *bogwera* initiates may be seen walking and dancing around the village, community members will not recognise who they are as their faces are shielded by the grass attire they are wearing as in Figure 9. Taking into account the two different initiations, the focus of this study was on *bodika*, the first initiation.



Figure 9. Bogwera

https://www.google.co.za/url?sa=t&source=web&rct=j&url=https://wol.jw.org/nso/wol/d/r165/lpse/102004883&ved=0ahUKEwjonaLYnu_UAhWjBcAKHZWFD64QFghSMAw&usg=AFQjCNGp4BiHEbYwbOz1CXTroKiv4teyA (retrieved July 3, 2017)

In *Lonely Hearts*, Nkadimeng starts by introducing the initiation school in which Mr Mazwi and his son, Malope, have a conversation, which shows how passionate Mazwi is about his culture:

“Malope, my son, do you see the smoke over there?”

“Yes, father. You mean the one there in the valley of Tsokung mountain?”

“Of course, one day you will be attending that school, without that school you won’t be a man.”

“My dear father, I am already at school. I am in Grade 10 now.”

“But you must know that initiation school is one of the most respectable institutions in our culture.” (Nkadimeng, 2004, p. 1)

The conversation between Malope and his father, Mazwi, shows how Mazwi, as an African man, values his own culture, the African culture, and that for an African boy to become a man, he must go through the mountain school, the initiation school, otherwise he will not be regarded as a man but an outcast in his own community and be referred to as '*lešoboro*'¹⁸. Ziervogel and Mokgokong (1975) defines *lešoboro* as an uncircumcised boy, and goes on to indicate that such a boy does not have a standing in society. The way the topic was introduced to Malope was not as an instruction, but it was done as though Mazwi wanted to show Malope, something interesting about the mountain. At the time of this conversation between father and son, Malope's elder brother, Jabulani, was attending the initiation school on the mountain that Mazwi was showing him, and the initiates were going to graduate as men the following week.

To demonstrate how highly initiation is valued by Africans, Nkadimeng describes the women brewing African beer in preparation for the big graduation day.

When they graduate, it means they are ready to become real men and can now marry and have children, as indicated in Nkadimeng's novel:

"Jabulani and his fellow graduates are anxious to reach their homes and young girls are expecting marriage from them. Because this is African and these graduates acquire African customary laws of which they value and respect." (p. 6)

After the ceremony, the boys acquire manhood status like their fathers and grandfathers, and can now sit at the *kgoro* and solve community problems and disputes, and share ideas and advice where needed, as he is no longer a *lešoboro*. A *lešoboro* is a boy who has not undergone the initiation process in the mountain and is considered equivalent to a woman. Such a boy

¹⁸ *Lešoboro* – a boy who has not been circumcised.

cannot sit with other men at the *kgoro* and share with them the news of whatever is taking place at that time, even though he has grown into a physical state of becoming a man.

Nkadimeng emphasised that the next mountain school would only take place in five years' time, indicating that there was an interval of five years to allow for another group of young boys to qualify for mountain school, and to be old enough to endure the coldness of winter weather in the mountain valleys and withstand the pain of the surgery.

Achebe's novel described an interval of three years: "But the initiation rite was performed once in three years in Umuofia, and he had to wait for nearly two years for the next round of ceremonies." (p. 161)

In *Things Fall Apart*, because Okonkwo would not initiate his sons in a foreign land, he waited to return to Umuofia for the initiation of his sons. The reason for not wanting them to be initiated in motherland was that if he initiated them in his fatherland in the *ozo*¹⁹ society, he would be able to show his wealth, as was only done by really great men in the clan (Achebe, 1958, p. 151). When Okonkwo returned from exile in his motherland, the initiation school had already taken place a year before, and Okonkwo would have to wait for another two years to initiate his two sons because of the three-year interval.

In *Down Second Avenue*, Mphahlele (p 4) mentioned initiation school only in passing, and did not specify how important it was. He was aware of this type of school but did not dwell much on the details. He indicated that they were a sacred place where people were chased and beaten when they trespassed, because only those who had graduated could gain access, and the uncircumcised were not allowed anywhere near the area. Mphahlele writes the following about the initiation schools:

But often, if a Christian chanced to meet a circumcision school, the initiates gave chase

¹⁹ *Ozo* – the highest rank in society.

and beat him up, swearing at him and all his ancestry in the process. There were certain areas away in the mountains and forests which were regarded as private property and sacred ground for their schools. (p. 4)

To show that initiation was as important in Kenya as in other African countries, Thiong'o's novel, *A Grain of Wheat*, shows how they would sing and dance during the ceremonies. However, unlike Achebe, Mphahlele and Nkadimeng, Thiong'o (2008) does not give any indication of how often they took place, stating only: "They mixed Christmas hymns with songs and dances only performed during initiation rites when boys and girls are circumcised into responsibility as men and women." (p. 221)

Thiong'o (2008) is the only author of the four selected authors to make mention of female initiation, that initiates girls into responsible women. The initiation of girls is termed *dikgopa*²⁰ and, unlike boys, initiation takes place in-house. *Dikgopa* initiation is followed by *bjale*²¹, which takes place simultaneously with the male initiation *bogwera*. These two initiations take place at a different time from the initiation that takes place in winter. In contrast to *bodika*, *bogwera* and *bjale* takes place in the summertime. The other three selected authors were silent about girls' circumcision; their focus was on initiating boys into responsible manhood.

Mophaso

Mophaso is a ritual ceremony in which the ancestors are invited to share in a celebration. A ritual is performed for both happy and sad occasions.

In Nkadimeng's *Lonely Hearts*, a celebratory ritual was performed when Jabulani

²⁰ *Dikgopa* – the first initiation for girls.

²¹ *Bjale* – the initiation girls undergo after *dikgopa*.

graduated from mountain school, and was given the name *Ngwato*, a praise name inherited from his grandfather who had passed away several years before. A ritual had to be performed at his grandfather's grave to inform him that the name *Ngwato* continued to live beyond the grave. An animal had to be slaughtered and its blood poured onto the grave. Nkadameng describes how the ritual was performed:

In the middle of the kraal there is a grave. Jabulani's father carries blood of the slaughtered goat with a calabash and his mother carries beer with another calabash. And Jabulani's cousin has wooden container in her hand full of bones of slaughtered goat. They sing a mournful song – the dirge before *Ngwato* (Jabulani) can empty the container over the innocent grave. (p. 11)

This passage indicates that for every occasion, the ancestors had to be invited to share in the happiness or the grief taking place in the family. They were invited, through the performance of the ritual, by pouring the blood of the slaughtered animal, not necessarily a goat, and putting the bones of that animal on the grave. In this way, the participants were satisfied that whatever they did or ate that day, the ancestors were sharing with them and everything would go as planned, without disturbance, because the ancestors were with them.

African beer, alternatively referred to by Nkadameng as sorghum beer or traditional beer, is a symbol for worshipping the ancestors. In African tradition, no ancestral worship is performed without African beer and snuff. It is a custom that when a ritual is performed, African beer is prepared and the snuff concludes the performance.

Mphahlele demonstrated that he also had experience with ancestral worship as he constantly refers to them in his novel. He even cites examples of statistics of Africans who still believed in ancestral intervention in whatever they faced in life:

What I do know is that about eight out of every ten educated Africans, most of whom

are also professed Christians, still believe firmly in the spirits of their ancestors. We don't speak to one another about it among the educated. But when we seek moral guidance and inspiration and hope somewhere in the recesses of our being, we grope around for some link with those spirits. (p. 54)

This indicates that Mphahlele (1959), as an educated person, included himself among the eight out of ten Africans who still believed in ancestral intervention, who depended on them during times of need.

Achebe (1958) demonstrates his understanding of ancestral worship, by showing Okonkwo banishing his own flesh and blood, Nwoye, from his compound for worshipping God. Okonkwo talks to his other children about banishing them as he did with Nwoye:

You have all seen the great abomination of your brother. Now he is no longer my son or your brother. I will only have a son who is a man, who will hold his head up among my people. If any of you prefers to be a woman, let him follow Nwoye now while I am alive so that I can curse him. If you turn against me when I am dead I will visit you and break your neck. (p. 152)

Okonkwo's words indicate that a dead person could still haunt and do him harm if he had not listened and respected his wishes while the person was still alive. Okonkwo was against Nwoye worshipping God in his compound when he had his ancestors to worship. When Okonkwo's time arrived to return from exile, he threw a big feast for his mother's people who had welcomed him after he had been banished from his fatherland. In this feast, three goats and a number of fowls were slaughtered. It was like a wedding ceremony. Achebe indicates that the ancestors also attended the feast:

All the *umunna* were invited to the feast, all the descendants of Okolo, who had lived

about two hundred years before. The oldest member of this extensive family was Okonkwo's uncle, Uchendu. The kola nut was given to him to break, and he prayed to the ancestors. He asked them for health and children. (p. 146)

This quotation shows that even people who were no longer alive, dead people whom they regarded as their gods, were invited to Okonkwo's farewell ceremony before he returned to his fatherland, and to be part of Okonkwo thanking his mother's people for taking care of his family during the seven years that he had spent with them.

Thiong'o (2008), on the contrary, does not say much about the ancestors, even though he believed in ancestral intervention:

People say the man talks with God and receives messages from spirits of the dead. Or how do you explain that at Rira he escaped alive while ten of those involved in the hunger strike died? And remember, he was the leader? (p. 174)

The survival of Mugo when he was on hunger strike with other detainees, was attributed to the fact that his ancestors were with him. The fact that he did not die while the other ten that were with him died showed that his ancestors intervened on his behalf and protected him from dying.

Achebe (1958) is the only author of the four to make mention of a special place of worship, by describing Okonkwo's appearance after having made a personal god in the form of wood:

Near the barn was a small house, the 'medicine house' or shrine where Okonkwo kept the wooden symbols of his personal god and of his ancestral spirits. He worshipped them with sacrifices of kola nut, food and palm-wine, and offered prayers to them on behalf of himself, his three wives and eight children. (p. 13)

From the preceding analysis, it is evident that the four authors were influenced by the role played by the ancestors in the lives of Africans. They needed to be invited to share in happy and sad occasions so that bad luck did not befall the people who did not take pride in worshipping the ancestors.

Marriage

Marriage is a communion in which two people, man and woman, are brought together with the purpose of procreating. The groom's family is responsible for paying the bride price.

In *Lonely Hearts*, Mazwi and Hunadi are married through customary law, and have two sons. According to African culture, this marriage did not prevent Mazwi from marrying another wife, as long as he was capable of taking care of them. Mazwi married another wife, Pebetse, with Hunadi's consent (Nkadimeng, 2004, p. 31).

According to African tradition, the first wife is regarded as the chief wife, and her status allows her to make decisions for the families of the wives married to her husband after her. The number of wives depends on the ability of the husband to take care of them. Nkadimeng showed how Eurocentrism was gradually killing Afrocentrism, by indicating that Mazwi married his second wife in Western law, after he had married his first wife in traditional law. Eurocentrism does not go hand in hand with Afrocentrism, but undermines it, because once the husband marries another wife in Western law, the status of the principal or first wife is nullified by the second marriage, as the man marries only one wife.

Nkadimeng's novel describes instances of the first wife's involvement in the courtship of his second wife. She is even the chief negotiator in the '*magadi*' negotiations. In terms of African marriage, the first wife can do this because she will be relieved of some of the many responsibilities she had before the second marriage, such as cooking, laundry and making his bed, which the second wife takes.

Achebe (1958) on the other hand describes Okonkwo as having three wives and 11 children. He mentions how Okonkwo considered rebuilding his compound when he came back from exile, where he was thinking of marrying two more wives:

Even in his first year in exile he had begun to plan for his return. The first thing he would do would be to rebuild his compound on a more magnificent scale. He would build a bigger barn than he had before and he would build huts for two new wives.

Achebe (p. 151)

As an African man, Okonkwo was determined to prove his manhood, by marrying two more wives on top of the three that he already had when he left Umoufia. In African culture, there is no restriction as to how many wives a man may marry, provided his wealth is sufficient to ensure that his wives and children do not go to bed on empty stomachs.

In *A Grain of Wheat*, Thiong'o introduces the topic of multiple wives when Karanja was talking to his mother, whom he said was the third of the four wives that Karanja's father had acquired by paying the bride price in goats and cattle. Mphahlele (1959) spoke about a standard family of a mother and father and children, while Nkadimeng (2004) talked of a father and two wives, Achebe (1958) of a father and three wives and Thiong'o (2008) of a family of a father and four wives. None of these scenarios is surprising in the context of the African family.

Achebe (1958) and Thiong'o (2008) have described similar scenarios in which the man had his own hut and had built each of the wives a hut for her and her children in the same yard. Karanja's father's compound comprised five huts, one for himself and one for each of his four wives. Okonkwo's compound comprised four huts, one for him and one for each of his three wives, while he anticipated building two more huts for the new wives he would marry on his return to the fatherland, bringing to six the number of huts in his compound.

A hut is a house with a grass thatched roof and mud walls (Thiong'o, 2008, p. 3). In *Things Fall Apart*, Okonkwo's wives took turns to visit in his hut, called an *obi*, while in *A Grain of Wheat*, Karanja's father would visit the wives in turn, on a rotating basis, in their own huts.

In the case of Mazwi in *Lonely Hearts*, the two wives had separate places far from each other, unlike the wives in Achebe's and Thiong'o's novels, whose huts were built within the same compound. Mazwi took turns visiting his wives in their homes and later abandoned the senior wife and spent most of his time in the second wife's home. Mphahlele differs from these three authors in that in his book, only marriages to one partner are evident. Mphahlele's family was his mother, father and five children, and his wife Rebecca and their three children.

In African culture, a person is not regarded as a being married unless the '*magadi*' has been paid in full. The payment of the bride price differs from country to country, but in all cases is paid by the groom's family to the bride's family. In South Africa and Kenya, cattle and goats are used, while cowrie shells are used in Nigeria.

The '*magadi*' had to be negotiated by the two families until they reached an agreement. After this agreement, food would have been already prepared and the two families would then start feasting and getting to know each other better. Achebe's novel describes the '*magadi*' negotiations process:

Obierika then presented to him a small bundle of short broomsticks. Ukegbu counted them. "They are thirty?" he asked. Obierika nodded in agreement.

"We are at last getting somewhere," Ukegbu said, and then turning to his brother and his son he said: "Let us go out and whisper together."

The three rose and went outside. When they returned Ukegbu handed the bundle of sticks back to Obierika. He counted them; instead of thirty they were now only fifteen. He passed them over to his eldest brother, Machi, who also counted them and

said: “We had not thought to go below thirty. But as the dog said, ‘If I fall down for you and you fall down for me, it is play’. Marriage should be a play and not a fight; so we are falling down again.” He then added ten sticks to the fifteen and gave the bundle to Ukegbu.”

The two families played the negotiation game like that until they settled the ‘*magadi*’ at twenty bags of cowries. (p. 63)

The marriage negotiations presented in this passage do not differ from common practice in South Africa, where two families come together and negotiate the ‘*magadi*’, except that the ‘*magadi*’ is generally in the form of money. The money represents a certain number of cows, and the families would agree on how much a cow was worth. The bride’s family would state a price, and the groom’s family would negotiate for the price to be lowered until the two parties reached an agreement.

To indicate that they had reached an agreement, the negotiators would ululate and then the feasting would begin. Although food would have been prepared, nothing would be eaten prior to the team representing the bride’s family indicating that the two families had agreed to the ‘*magadi*’.

In Mphahlele’s novel (1959, p. 150), even though the negotiators from both the bride’s and the groom’s sides lost their tempers due to the toughness of the bride’s uncles who were negotiating, they later reached an agreement and the ‘*magadi*’ was settled at £60. The day ended comfortably because two chickens were slaughtered to feed the negotiators. To illustrate the difficulty in raising the ‘*magadi*’, Mphahlele writes:

I had felt a groggy sensation when I was told of the £60. Where was I going to rake such a sum? Arthur Blaxall had given me a job outside office hours, doing secretarial work in preparation for a conference of the Christian Council, of which he was a part-

time organizer? I had barely collected the £60 in six months and thus, with pride, I had proceeded to claim my bride.” (p. 150)

The ‘*magadi*’ had been pitched very high and the bride’s uncles were not prepared to negotiate lower than £60, to the extent that both the negotiators lost their tempers:

“You have not come for a calabash that’s been thrown on the rubbish heap, or for a broken calabash,” one of the uncles had said. “Her mother sent her to school,” the other uncle had added, “and now she’s going to lose one leg when the daughter goes.” (p. 151)

In all four books selected for this study, contrary to the African custom when negotiating for ‘*magadi*’, there is no mention of a live animal being presented to the groom’s family by the bride’s family, to take home with them, as a sign that the negotiations between the two families had gone well (Myburgh, 1981).

In African culture and tradition, *ngwana ke wa dikgomo*²², which means that if a man marries a woman who already has a child, by virtue of having paid *magadi*, the child automatically becomes his and takes his name. This occurred in three of the selected books: *Lonely Hearts*, *A Grain of Wheat* and *Down Second Avenue*. In *Lonely Hearts*, when Mazwi married Pebetse, she already had a daughter, Dikeledi, by another man. By virtue of Mazwi having paid ‘*magadi*’ for Pebetse, Dikeledi then became Mazwi’s daughter and she called him father. Jabulani and Malope, Mazwi’s two sons by Hunadi, his first wife, became Dikeledi’s brothers and they then had a sister. African culture does not usually speak of half-brothers or

²² *Ngwana ke wa dikgomo* means the man who paid *lobola* for a woman who already has a child becomes the father of the child by virtue of having paid *lobola* for the mother.

half-sisters (Nkadimeng, 2004). However, mention is made of a half-sister in *Things Fall Apart* (Achebe, 1958, p. 153).

In *A Grain of Wheat*, Mumbi was married to Gikonyo, who had run away to the concentration camp, during the political unrest in Kenya. While still in the concentration camp, Mumbi fell pregnant by Karanja, Gikonyo's friend, and gave birth to a baby boy. By custom, the boy became Gikonyo's son despite not being his biological son. Karanja could not claim the boy to be his because he had not paid the bride price for Mumbi, whereas Gikonyo had. Gikonyo had returned when the boy was already two years old, and he was not happy about what had taken place in his absence. He did not like the boy, but because he had married Mumbi, the boy's mother, the boy became his by custom. Gikonyo had to live with that and learn to accept the boy as his son. Karanja would not have the pleasure of seeing the boy whenever he wanted to because by custom, the boy was not his, though biologically he is the boy's father (Thiong'o, 2008).

In *Down Second Avenue*, Ma-Lebona had been married twice. She had a daughter from the second marriage and lived with a third man without marrying and had a son, John. By custom, the daughter and the son, John, would take Ma-Lebona's first husband's name because he was the first man to marry their mother, although he was not their biological father. John would not take his father's name because his father was not recognised in the family as the son-in-law as he had not paid the bride price for his mother. In contrast to this, Mphahlele (1959) makes mention two of the aunts who, when not working, had children without securing a man they could call a husband. All their children took their mothers' surnames as theirs because none of the fathers had paid the bride price for them.

In *Things Fall Apart*, a child belonged to its father, which is why it was customary for a child to take its fathers name and not the mothers' name, as the father had paid the bride price

and not the other way round. This is illustrated by Okonkwo's refusal of his daughters' marriage in his motherland – where his mother is married from, to which he had been exiled. He wanted his daughters to be married in his fatherland –where he, Okonkwo, is born from, and which is his father's place:

“There are many good and prosperous people here, but I shall be happy if you marry in Umuofia when we return home.” That was all he had said. But Ezinma had seen clearly all the thought and hidden meaning behind the few words. And she agreed. “Your half-sister, Obiageli, will not understand me,” Okonkwo said. “But you can explain to her.” (Achebe, 1958, p. 153)

Okonkwo implied that he did not want his daughters getting married in his motherland but he did not want to tell them directly. Because Ezinma understood what his father wanted to say, she refused all the young men and prosperous middle-aged men of Mbanta who wanted to marry her, and was able to influence her half-sister to also refuse any offer of marriage. Okonkwo wanted his beautiful young ladies to be married by good and prosperous men in Umuofia so that their marriage would earn him recognition in the community. Okonkwo knew that with two beautiful grown-up daughters, his return to Umuofia would attract considerable attention. His future sons-in-law would be men of authority in the clan. The poor and unknown would not dare to come forth (p. 153). Okonkwo looked forward to his return to Umuofia with two beautiful young ladies ready for marriage.

All four authors' books speak of marriage and marriage customs, indicating that they were familiar with the fact that for a woman to be considered married and have children in the name of her husband, the man should have settled the bride price demanded by the woman's family, otherwise they would not be considered a married couple and living together would be considered illegitimate.

Kgoro

Kgoro is a gathering place in the chief's residence where issues of the village's community are discussed and decisions are made. Cases ranging from family disputes to community building are discussed. Only men are allowed to take part in discussions of this nature, particularly men who have undergone initiation school. *Kgoro* is also a communal meeting place for men in the absence of any activity in the community and boys are permitted to accompany their fathers.

There is always a communal fire in the fireplace at the royal kraal and boys learn from the old men about the history, traditions and customs, code of behaviour and communal responsibilities. The communal fireplace is a place for men and boys; women and girls are not allowed (Mphahlele, 1959). Achebe (1958) emphasises that not all men, but only older men and boys should sit around log fires, warming their bodies.

Traditionally, a horn is blown to convene a meeting at the *kgoro*. Once the horn has been blown, members of the community have discussions amongst each other to find out what the meeting is all about.

Figure 9 shows the horn that is to be blown when inviting men to the *kgoro* for a meeting.



Figure 10. Picture of a horn. http://www.cadtutor.net/forum/showthread.php?17371-Comp5_Fuccarro_3
retrieved on 31 October 2018

According to Nkadimeng (2004), the chief's noble man is the one who is appointed by the chief to blow the horn. When men within the community hear the sound of the horn, they immediately know that there is a matter at hand that needs to be attended to and be settled. Without wasting any time, the men will leave whatever they are doing and rush to the *kgoro* without delay to hear what they are being summoned for.

Nkadimeng (2004) therefore, emphasises that the calling to a gathering was habitual and customary and the only way people were summoned to a gathering by means of a horn, which he called a war-horn.

Achebe (1958) also highlights the blowing of a horn for gathering people at the communal meeting place. In Achebe's case, they were meeting at the market-place which would appear to be their communal meeting place as a *kgoro* was not mentioned. Every time a horn was blown, the people knew they had to go to the *ilo* which, according to Achebe, was a meeting place for the villagers when certain activities were taking place. Women and children were also welcome at the *ilo* which was a community playground.

On this particular day, Achebe (p. 80) mentions a hearing of Ezowulu who was always beating his wife, to the extent that the wife had run away to her motherland. The hearing took place because Ezowulu wanted his bride price to be paid back now that the wife had gone to her motherland and he no longer had someone to cook for him. Both parties were given a hearing and a ruling was made based on the evidence given. For that trial, Ezowulu was told to take a pot of wine to his in-laws to beg for his wife back. The in-laws were also told to accept the pot of wine and send the wife back to her husband, and the case was dismissed. After this case, another two groups replaced the previous one, this being for the land case.

It is an African custom that should the offender be found guilty by the *kgoro*, the fine should be in the form of cattle or goats, depending on the severity of the offence. Nkadimeng's novel raises the issue of using cattle for paying fines:

After he has been tried, Chief Tau ordered several men to Mazwi's home where they were going to have five head of cattle driven from Mazwi's kraal to the royal kraal. Initially Mazwi was supposed to have paid by three cattle but after indiscriminately cursing at everyone he was again fined another two cattle, which made a total of five cattle. (p. 47)

Nkadimeng shows that Mazwi, who offended the traditional *kgoro* by beating up his wife and children, was found guilty by the *kgoro* and was fined three cattle with immediate effect. The fining of the offender is echoed in Matsepe's novel, *Megokgo ya bjoko*, where Leilane, who committed an offence by beating up his wife, was fined three cattle with immediate effect (Matsepe, 1976). According to African traditional law, once the perpetrator has been fined, the cattle should be brought in front of the people at the *kgoro*, where one cow is slaughtered immediately and feasted on.

In Mazwi's case, one cow was slaughtered, and the other two were given to his two sons. Because Mazwi was not happy with the verdict, he indiscriminately cursed everyone in the royal kraal including the chief himself, and was therefore fined another two cows, bringing the fine to five cows. Multitudes of men who had attended the *kgoro* began singing and dancing because they were happy that they were going to feast on Mazwi's two cows which were to be slaughtered in front of everyone. In total, three cattle were slaughtered and feasted on.

The chief is the head of the community and has wise men who assist in making both pleasant and unpleasant decisions over his people. As head of his people, he has authority to find the offenders in his piece of land guilty or not guilty. Whatever the chief says goes. After Mazwi was found guilty of offending the people by rebuking everybody at the *kgoro*, the chief was left with no option but to banish him and his junior family from his land because, according

to traditional law, *go nyatša kgoši ke go tloga*²³.

Achebe (1958), on the other hand, describes an incident in which Okonkwo beat his wife during the Week of Peace. According to the custom of Umoufia, no one was allowed to beat anybody during that week because he would be breaking the peace that was prevailing. For the beating, Okonkwo was fined one she-goat, one hen, a length of cloth and a hundred cowries, which he had to take to the shrine the following day. Understanding the severity of the offence that he had committed, Okonkwo obeyed the priest and took with him a pot of palm-wine on top of his fine. Men feasted with him because, unlike Mazwi, he was not banished from the land.

Although Mphahlele (1959) did not specifically talk about a *kgoro*, there must have been a *kgoro* at Maupaneng as the novel mentioned a man who had been banished from the land without his case being heard by the chief because it would have been too disgusting to be heard in public. Though not explicitly mentioned, a *kgoro* must have existed as there was mention of a case not being heard. A hearing in the traditional African context takes place only at the *kgoro*. This particular case was regarded as disgusting, as he was accused of doing something that would not have been done by a human being who was of sound mind. The two men who apprehended him, and saw fit to banish him from the village. Mphahlele (1959) describes what the man had done as being so evil it would make a heathen vomit:

And there was a man in the village who raided kraals in the early hours of the morning to milk cattle and goats. Villagers had tired of taking him to the chief's council. They merely shook their heads and clicked their tongues in leave-him-to-heaven fashion.

Matters came to a head when one or two men discovered that he was not only milking

²³ *go nyatša kgoši ke go tloga* – anyone who undermines the chief undermines the authority and has to be evicted.

the goats but was riding them for his sexual pleasure. The village outlawed him. (p. 9)

The villagers banished this man from their land without taking him to the chief to hear him out, because what he had done was inhumane and repulsive. He had been taken to the chief several times as that was not his first encounter, but that did not help. According to African customs and traditions, what this man had done was a taboo. Such acts were performed by uncircumcised men who had not attended initiation school to be taught by men how to behave.

They ordered the man to leave, shake off the dust from their village and go to start a new life somewhere across their river.

Thiong'o on the other hand, is silent about the *kgoro* and communal fireplace, although he makes mention of villages that are ruled by chiefs, with the village elders being the chief's advisors. There is mention of a fireplace in Mugo's hut, and Thiong'o indicates that fire is a sign of life in a home. When there is no fire, it means there is nobody in the house, especially in the evening:

Everything was set as she had left it the other night. The fire had clearly not been made for a day or two. The bed was not made. A worn-out blanket with bristles sticking out, hung from the bed on the floor. (p. 254)

This indicates that there had not been a sign of a living soul for a considerable period of two days in Mugo's hut since the fire had not been made. When Mumbi went back to Mugo's hut in the evening, there was still no light. Mugo had disappeared. After revealing a secret he had carried for many years, Mugo felt as if a heavy load had been lifted from his shoulders. He had disappeared and was never seen again. Nobody knew where he had gone.

Traditional Healing

Traditional healing is one of the most respected elements of Africans' lives. Once initiation institutions for circumcision have been established, a traditional healer is called on to strengthen the initiation territory so as to protect initiates from the evil deeds of witchcraft. Besides the initiation institutions, Africans depend on traditional healing for strengthening their homes as well. A traditional healer may be a man or a woman.

Sometimes, when people are unsure of what is happening in their lives, they consult a traditional healer who would throw the bones and interpret the way they had fallen. If the traditional healer interprets by saying "*di wele makgolela*" it means that something is wrong, either with a person's body or in their family. However, the problem can be dealt with and the traditional healer will prescribe what needs to be done. If he or she interprets by saying "*di wele mohlakola*" it means the problem is too big and serious and needs to be given urgent attention as the seriousness has even taken the king's wife's clothes off. It means it is a matter of life and death. Every time the bones are thrown, either the problem is minor or it is very big. It is very rare that they are thrown and when they fall nothing is detected.

Mphahlele writes about how Mathebula threw the bones every morning, at Second Avenue, in the cities, to find out what the day held in store for him:

At one end of the backyard Mathebula could be seen any morning sitting on a mat, his bones scattered in front of him while he mumbled magic words in Shangana. All of us, visitors alike, tried, as much as room allowed, to move clear of Mathebula's sphere of influence. (p. 26)

Mphahlele believed in the use of herbal medicine and that the boiling and drinking of herbs healed. He mentioned *serokolo*, a kind of herb that soothes sores on the chest, by chewing it and swallowing the saliva. Mphahlele also believed in using African herbs to prevent

becoming bewitched. This is evident in the use of herbal medicine by his grandmother as she confessed to her daughter, Aunt Dora, about using African herbs on them to prevent witches from bewitching them when she said:

“I hate witches who walk naked at night. You see your friends smile when you’re in luck but you don’t know how wicked they may be. No sooner does a new life shoot out and some friends want to kill it. Friend, friend, friend! Don’t think all people like to see you expecting a child. And babies aren’t to be had for any sum of money. My mother used herbs on me and I used herbs on all of you and you must do the same on your little lambs. God has given the Black doctor wisdom which the white man hasn’t got.” (p. 56)

Achebe (1958), like Mphahlele (1959), believed in the use of herbs for healing diseases. When Okonkwo’s daughter became ill, Okonkwo immediately thought of rushing to the bush to collect the leaves and grasses and barks of trees that went into making medicine for fever. In *Things Fall Apart*, Achebe writes about how fever was healed the traditional way using herbs:

“You must watch the pot carefully,” he said as he went, “and don’t allow it to boil over. If it does its power will be gone.” He went away to his hut and Ekwefi began to tend the medicine pot almost as if it was itself a sick child. Her eyes went constantly from Ezinma to the boiling pot and back to Ezinma. Okonkwo returned when he felt the medicine had cooked long enough. He looked it over and said it was done.

“Bring a low stool for Ezinma,” he said, “and a thick mat.” He took down the pot from the fire and placed it in front of the stool. He then roused Ezinma and placed her on the stool, astride the steaming pot. The thick mat was thrown over both. (p. 75)

This passage describes the process of *sekhoma*. It is a traditional belief that when a person perspires during the procedure because of the heat, it is a sign that healing will take place. This is especially true if the sick person falls into a deep sleep after the procedure, as people believe that the illness is gradually leaving the body, and that when the sick person wakes up, he or she will be better than before.

Traditional healing is still practiced by some Africans who believe in it, although it is not as widespread as before. The reason is that people mix with Christians and people who claim to be Westernised when they are in fact Africans, and who regard traditional healing as witchcraft or regard other people as heathens or unholy. They are led to believe that consulting with a traditional healer diminishes their status to nothingness. When confronted with a terrible situation, they will consult traditional healers in secret or during the night when no one could see them.

The term witchdoctor that is attached to traditional healers, causes communities to alienate traditional healers because of the notion that they are involved in acts of bewitching members of the community. This stems from the South African system that made African people believe that “civilization” and “progress” were associated with Westernisation. They are led to believe that for one to be civilized, one has to lead a Western life because Western societies are regarded as being civilized. In so doing, they forget that they will be a nation which is like a tree without roots, which can be blown down by the wind at any given moment. Mashige (2002) supported this view:

It was the same system that indoctrinated oppressed groups into believing that their culture and sense of identity were inherently inferior to that of the oppressor group. This sense of inferiority manifested itself in various forms, amongst which was a pathological self-hate mentality amongst the oppressed groups. (p. 52)

The ‘oppressed’ that Mashige (2002) spoke of are the African groups while the ‘oppressors’ are the Western groups. Traditional healers assist members of the community with the illnesses with which Western doctors are unfamiliar.

Traditional healers do not become healers by choice, but are compelled to do it by their ancestral spirits as it is a calling.

Unfortunately, there are individuals who take advantage of the industry and exploit vulnerable people, by claiming to be traditional healers when, in fact, they are not. These frauds jeopardise the practice of traditional healing because once a person realises that they have been taken advantage of, will paint other traditional healers with the same brush. When a person is desperate for help, they are more susceptible to being deceived. Sepota and Mohlake (2012) agreed with this viewpoint by saying:

Because some people are taking advantage of the situation, coupled with desperation, ignorance and the need for a quick-fix solution, there is a danger of desperate people being seduced by bogus professors and doctors’ adverts to marginalize real traditional healing. (p. 7)

These counterfeit traditional healers are guilty of preventing African people from regarding traditional healing as a genuine option – they tend to ignore it and later die when they could have received help. Diseases or illnesses such as *makgoma*²⁴, need traditional healing and cannot be treated by a Western doctor. Traditional healers know what mixture to prepare so that the person who contracted the *makgoma* can be healed. This knowledge is

²⁴ *Makgoma* – illnesses caused by disobeying the cultural rules

restricted to genuine traditional healers as they have indigenous knowledge.

Conclusion

From the discussion on social customs, it is clear that all four authors had a similar understanding of the social aspects of folklore. They had similar practices with respect to circumcision, marriage customs, performing rituals and traditional gatherings. Based on the literary texts that were identified and analysed, it is clear that circumcision, as a cultural practice, is observed in South, East and West Africa. It is also evident that circumcision, as a cultural practice in African countries, is central in the lives of Africans. No African man can be proud unless he has gone to the mountain school to prove his manhood. To uphold this cultural practice, many African authors continue to write about the importance of circumcision.

This commonality between the authors' works indicates that they have written from the knowledge they gathered in the different localities encountered in their upbringing, and that the practices are similar. The customs prevailing in their different communities have influenced their writings. This demonstrates that as Africans, what they write about comes from their life experiences, including their interactions with members of their communities.

Chapter 6: A Survey on Physical Folk Life and Performing Arts as Portrayed within the Four Texts

This chapter discusses the practice of agriculture in the form of farming and architecture as elements of occupational folklore. Africans are subsistence farmers and stock or crop farming were the two types of farming that were evaluated when analysing and comparing the four selected authors for this study. Okeke (2005) defined occupational folklore as:

...different ceremonies organized in relation to different economic engagements of societal members. For example, all the ceremonies performed for planting and harvesting of farm crops, fishing and canoe festivals in the riverine areas, which depicts their occupation. Ceremonies that require appeasing the gods of the land, sea and weather in different parts of the country are also examples of occupational folklore. (p. 106)

The chapter further discusses performing art, referred to as material culture by the British Columbia Folklore Society (BCFS) (2000). Art is a prestigious gift in the lives of Africans and includes folk art, pottery, crafts and decorative ironwork. The chapter further discusses witchcraft, music and dance.

Okeke (2005) viewed material culture as referring to tangible physical items or objects that are associated with the society in question, such as clay pots, bowls or other utensils, with traditional artistic designs and decorations, as well as local farming implements. These items are traditionally or locally made, and include native architectural designs as found in buildings and artistic designs in native clothing. The items may differ from culture to culture depending on which part of Africa one comes from. They may also differ from community to community in the same culture depending on the influence of neighbouring cultures.

Farming

Farming is an important element in the life of an African. An African farmer will either have a piece of land to plough and plant different seeds to be able to feed the family, or stock of cattle, sheep and goats. People who do not possess either the stock or land are regarded as poor, because they depend on their neighbours to be able to feed their children.

In *Lonely Hearts*, Nkadimeng discussed Mazwi's family with cattle and the boys herding those cattle in the mountains far from home because that was where there was good grazing land. Mazwi was a stock farmer. The cattle from Hunadi's kraal were driven to Pebetse's kraal when Mazwi had a fight with his sons for disrespecting him. Nkadimeng (2004) makes emerge Hunadi telling her son of the news she heard from the herd boys:

Malope my son, your father and Pebetse are continuing to humiliate me. Look at the cattle kraal there is nothing. Your father and Pebetse took our cattle from the field and they have been driven to Pebetse's home. We have just heard this painful and heart-breaking news from the herd boys. As I am talking now they are at Pebetse's kraal. (p. 39)

Nkadimeng did not mention a piece of land for farming, which means Mazwi's family depended on milking the cows. Now that they had been taken away from them, they would have to come up with a plan for survival.

Mazwi had cattle and was considered a wealthy man which is why he managed to marry his second wife. Men would not afford to have more than one wife if they did not have stock or a piece of land, because having more than one wife meant having more children and he would need to be able to feed the children. When Mazwi was found guilty of abusing his senior wife, Hunadi and children, he was fined five cows which he immediately took from his herd of cattle to settle the fine.

Similarly, in *Down Second Avenue*, Mphahlele was a stock farmer and wrote about the boys from different families taking turns to herd the goats and donkeys. Mphahlele (1959) often went with his grandmother and paternal uncle to the fields for ploughing, hoeing, keeping the birds away from the crops and harvesting, indicating that they were also crop farmers. Although a stock farmer, Mphahlele (1959) revealed that they hardly ate meat:

About the only time we had goat's meat or beef was when livestock died. A man might have a herd of fifty or more goats, as we had, and not slaughter one in six months. I can never forget the stinking carcasses we feasted on. Often we just ate practically dry boiled corn. (p. 09)

This passage reveals that even when a person had more livestock than he could count, killing and giving to the family to eat was a taboo since they represented one's wealth whether cattle, sheep or goats. They would never kill for the family to eat when there was nothing to eat, but would rather have the family members go to bed on an empty stomach. Meat was only eaten when one of the animals died, probably because of unfavourable weather conditions such as drought, when livestock would die in large numbers. In these situations, they would be made to eat meat even if they did not feel like it, and would be punished for refusing to eat meat.

Several families in the village had kraals for cattle and goats. In Mphahlele's novel, he tells of a man who raided kraals in the early hours of the morning to milk the goats, but the villagers became tired of reporting him to the chief. He was later driven away by the villagers after they realised that he was not only milking the goats but also riding them for his sexual pleasure (Mphahlele, 1959).

In *A Grain of Wheat*, Thiong'o tells how Mugo came to be a crop farmer. Mugo's mother left him at a tender age and he stayed with a distant aunt who treated him badly. After

the death of this aunt, Mugo was left alone to fend for himself by ploughing and eating what he harvested:

He turned to the soil. He would labour, sweat, and through success and wealth, force society to recognize him. There was for him, then, solace in the very act of breaking the soil: to bury seeds and watch the green leaves heave and thrust themselves out of the ground, to tend the plants to ripeness and then harvest. (p. 9)

This was the life that Mugo knew and lived. He would harvest and have something to eat, and would then wait for the next ploughing season and start the process all over again. He had nothing else to do than to go through the process over and over until he was recruited to join the movement. In (Thiong'o, 2008) Mugo was even referred to as "farmer" by the police guards, as revealed in the conversation he had with the District Officer about his confession for deceiving Kihika:

"I – I want to see him alone," he said, surprised.

"With a jembe and a panga? Ha! Ha! Ha!"

"I say what do you want here?"

"I cannot – not to you."

The two policemen laughed and jeered at Mugo's answers. They took his panga and jembe and threw them on the ground.

"Can't! Can't! Do you hear that? Hey, farmer, what do you want?" (p. 215)

The policemen referred to Mugo as 'farmer' because wherever he went, he took the jembe and panga that he used for ploughing the fields. They were his personal belongings and he did not leave them behind, because he could make a living with them when people called on him to come and clear the fields for them.

On the eve of the Uhuru celebration, a heavy rain had fallen and uprooted some strong trees, broken some of their branches, and even uprooted the crops in the fields. Thiong'o (2008) writes about the different crops that people in the village had planted:

Crops on the valley slopes were badly damaged. Running water had grooved trenches that now zigzagged all along the sloping fields. Uprooted potato and bean crops lay everywhere on the valley floor. The leaves of the maize plants still standing were lacerated into numerous shreds. (p. 222)

In *Things Fall Apart*, Achebe discusses farming by showing Okonkwo, when it was time for ploughing, dividing the yams among each of his wives to prepare them for the fields. Okonkwo had a barn where he stored his yams and a shed for the goats. In addition, each wife had a small extension to their huts for hens. Although Okonkwo had livestock, his major activity was in the fields ploughing and harvesting:

During the planting season Okonkwo worked daily on his farms from cock-crow until chickens went to roost. He was a very strong man and rarely felt fatigue. But his wives and children were not as strong, and so they suffered. But they dared not complain openly. (p. 13)

Achebe (1958) indicates that Okonkwo was not a man of thought but of action. However, in the absence of work, talking was his next best occupation. He wanted to be seen working to prove to the community that he was not like his father Unoka, who died owing almost everybody in the community. After Okonkwo was banished from his fatherland, on arrival in the motherland, his uncle gave him pieces of land on which to farm during the coming planting season so that he would be able to take care of his family while in exile (Achebe: 1958).

Architecture

As an element of occupational folk life, architecture involves drawing plans and building infrastructure. Architecture is defined as the art and study of designing buildings (Hornby, 2010). Architectural engineering, also known as building engineering, is the application of building principles and technology to building design and construction. The hut is a form of architecture, and is a traditional African house, circular in form, with a grass-thatched roof and mud walls. The man of the house is responsible for erecting a structure of wood, while the women would complete the job by filling and rendering the walls with mud.

As the one who erects the structure, the man may be regarded as an unskilled architectural engineer and because of the way the hut is structured, it may be assumed that the African man is a mathematician. The fire is made in the centre of the hut, so that the hut has the same radius from the centre to all points on the circumference. The apex, which usually marks the centre of the roof, is located perpendicularly above the centre of the circumference, which makes it easier for the hut to be well roofed so that even heavy rain water will not leak in. Figure 11 is an example of a hut in its original form, before it is decorated:



Figure 11. Traditional hut at Leretjeng Village in the Greater Tzaneen Municipality of Mopani District, Limpopo (March 13, 2012).

The inside of the roof of a hut is similar to the one in Figure 12 below.



Figure 12: Inside roof of a hut at Leretjeng Village in the Greater Tzaneen Municipality of Mopani District, Limpopo (June, 15 2013)

The rafters and the traditional renderings have been arranged in such a way that it is impossible for roof grass to fall down, even during windy days, as it is securely bound with a special rod. The grass that is used for roofing is called *tlhokwa*,²⁵ which is specifically meant for roofing. Africans are good at selecting this type of grass. The style of roofing differs from area to area and some roofs have a stepped style similar to the one shown in Figure 13. The hut in Figure 13 is more modern, with walls of cement, rather than the mud used in traditional huts, but it has been roofed with grass.

²⁵ *Tlhokwa* – a type of grass specifically used for roofing



Figure 13. Stepped style decorative roofing on hut at Tšhabelang Village within the Greater Letaba municipality of Mopani District, Limpopo (March 23, 2017).

After building and rendering has been completed, the hut is decorated on the outside and the inside. It has to be well finished to be considered suitable for sleeping in. The decorations, referred to as mural decorations, brighten up a dull wall and may even make a statement. Encyclopaedia Britannica (2005, 2006, 2009) identified different types of mural decorations, but the focus of this study was on murals using soil colours and cow dung to decorate the walls and the floors. Seroto (2012) identified different mathematical shapes in the decorations of traditional African buildings – which in this study would be the inside and outside walls and the floor of the hut – such as rectangles, triangles, ovals and squares.

Seroto (2012) further highlighted the symbolic and religious relevance attached to colours on the painted walls, such as white as a symbol of happiness and peace; and black and dark colours as symbols of negative emotions such as grief or sadness. Figure 14 is an example of a hut decorated on the outside using colourful soils.



Figure 14. Hut decorated in earth colours at Malete Cultural Village, Tlhabine in the Greater Tzaneen Municipality of Mopani District, Limpopo (April 28, 2012).

The inside walls of the hut are decorated as in Figure 15, which shows signs of happiness and peace in the family because of their white colouring (Seroto, 2012).



Figure 15. Decorations on the inside wall of a hut in Makhubidung Village in the Greater Tzaneen Municipality of Mopani District, Limpopo (March 21, 2014)

The floor of the hut and the area surrounded by average sized walls are finished by using cow dung to keep the inside free from dust. The floors look similar to the one in Figure 16 as only cow dung is used, unlike the walls where different colours of soil are used. These patterns show that the floor was not just smeared with cow dung to clear the dust but also to make it look beautiful and attractive to the people coming into the home.



Figure 16. Floor in the interior of a hut in Mohlatlareng Village in the Greater Tzaneen Municipality of Mopani District, Limpopo (July 13, 2016).

African huts still exist in most villages' homesteads, even though people build modern houses. People who are passionate about their culture and tradition still have huts. In most instances, the hut is used as a kitchen for storing household utensils and also for making fire during rainy seasons and winter to keep the children warm.

Africans reject the idea that huts are only for the poor; poverty is not a prerequisite for having a hut. People who are regarded as middle-class citizens in villages use the huts as

outbuildings despite having built modern houses. Some people, having adopted the Western culture, have modernised their huts by building with cement and bricks but still use grass roofs. Some have adopted the modern way of roofing with tiles or corrugated iron, but the structure retains the form of a hut. Figure 17 is an example of a modernised hut, built using bricks and finished with cement plaster, roof tiles, gutters and down-pipes for rain water.



Figure 17. A modernised hut in gaMaphalle Village in the Greater Letaba Municipality of Mopani District, Limpopo (November 30, 2017)

In most instances the hut serves as a kitchen. It may be a separate structure from the rest of the house or it may form an extension of the main house as Figure 18.



Figure 18. A hut as an extension of the main house in gaMaphalle Village in the Greater Letaba Municipality of Mopani District, Limpopo (November 30, 2017)

Achebe (1958) describes Okonkwo's compound as being surrounded by a thick wall of red earth, with his own hut immediately behind the gate that was the only entrance into the compound. Each of Okonkwo's wives had a hut. These were built in such a way that they formed a half moon behind Okonkwo's hut. The barn, which served as a store house was built against one end of the red walls. Okonkwo's homestead may have looked similar to the Figure 19 which has huts, with one small storage hut amongst them for storing the harvested mielies. Three huts would be used for sleeping, one for the husband, and one for each of the three wives, one hut would be used for storing household utensils and for making fire, and the small hut for storing the harvest from the ploughing fields.



Figure 19. Compound in Basani Village which is part of Collins Chabane local Municipality in Vhembe District
(May 23, 2012)

Thiong'o (p. 243) also mentions a hut when he tells how Karanja's father had built his hut a mile away from his wives. This demonstrates that Africans were able to count even though they did not attend formal school. The arrangement of Karanja's father's household was similar to the one describing Figure19 as he had four wives.

Nkadimeng (p. 10) describes a hut, when he writes that Mazwi's home had a hut in which Jabulani was surrounded by a crowd of all ages when he had just returned from mountain school. Depicting his characters living in huts indicates that Nkadimeng took pride in the African culture.

In Mphahlele's novel, although not explicitly stated, the community at Marabastad on the outskirts of the city of Tshwane, then Pretoria, lived in mud houses roofed with corrugated iron, but back at Maupaneng, Mphahlele (p. 1) introduces his grandmother seated under a small lemon tree next to a hut with thatched grass roof. This hut may have been unfamiliar to him coming from Marabastad where they lived in corrugated iron roofed houses. Mphahlele (1959) confirms it by stating that:

We swept the yard, however, a ten-foot border on all sides of the corrugated iron walls. The women made a lovely path from the gate to the front door, branching off to the back of the house. This was skirted on either side by small mud walls, and the floor was paved with mud smoothed with a slippery stone and then smeared with dung. Small pebbles had been worked in in a repeated triangular pattern. (p. 26)

This quotation reveals that people from the villages preserved their African status. Despite having houses roofed with corrugated iron, they were still surrounded with mud walls decorated to make their households clean and attractive, as in Figure20, with its eye-catching decorations, triangular and rectangular patterns.



Figure 20. Mud hut walls painted in striking designs at Mohlatlareng village in the Greater Tzaneen Municipality of Mopani District, Limpopo (October, 17 2016)

At Marabastad, as it is indicated in Mphahlele (1959), cow dung was used to keep the surroundings clean and clear of dust. Cow dung used to be popular in making African households clean. The community of Marabastad comprised people from different villages who had gone there in search of work. They built their houses there on the outskirts of the city and walked to the city for work.

Performing Art

Performing art in this study is divided into two parts – creative art and decorative art – which are discussed in detail in this section.

Creative art. Creative art includes witchcraft, and music and dance which demonstrate some elements of Africanism.

Witchcraft. Witchcraft is an African art that causes hatred among people in the same community. It is an art form in the sense that not every living human being can do it, and it is passed down from generation to generation, thereby making it part of folklore. Poor people are usually targeted for being bewitched because they do not own anything and cannot afford to find out what is happening to them. Their vulnerability makes them a target for witches.

Witchcraft exists in most African countries including South Africa. Witchcraft manifests itself in different forms. A business person who sold mielie meal in the Mopani district of Limpopo Province claimed that there was an old woman who frequently (every month) came to his shop to pay for an 80kg bag of mielie meal and requested that it be delivered to her house. She would give an instruction that there would be nobody at home, so on arrival, they should just open the door and put the bag of mielie meal behind it. When they delivered the mielie meal, there was no furniture in the hut; only a tub full of water at the centre of the house. People who are engaged in witchcraft do not do it because they want to, but because they are compelled to do it as they have inherited this role from their parents (Peltzer, 2002).

The researcher feels that the verity of this incident is questionable. The mielie meal was taken into the old woman's house in which no person had ever been observed. It begs the question of who was cooking in that house and with what utensils if there was nothing in the house except the tub at the centre where fire place was supposed to be. Another question would be, who ate the cooked mielie meal because, no person had been seen on the premises, even though mielie meal was being delivered on a monthly basis. It is possible that the house was so quiet that people would be fearful of looking around or saying anything to anyone because it may endanger the old woman's life. The community may rise against her because she would be suspected of being a witch. She would be forced to say who she was buying mielie meal for,

which she would not divulge, and would then be killed.

In another conversation with villagers in a different village in Vhembe district of Limpopo, an old woman was observed leaving her yard through the gate to go to the nearby spaza shop about five minutes' walking distance away, to buy bread so that she could have tea. The entire errand should have taken her about ten minutes, but she was seen seated in her home enjoying her tea just one minute after leaving her home. This raises the question: when did the old lady return with the bread because she was only seen leaving but her return was unnoticed and sudden? What magic did she play? Was it really her who went out, and if yes, when then did she return? Witchcraft is considered a form of black magic. When asked what they thought of the incident, the people answered that it was not her they saw leaving, but her personification (spirit).

Personification is explained as using some form of an animal such as a monkey, baboon or any other animal that can quickly take on a human form. In this case the animal would have left the hut in the form of the old woman, quickly gone and bought the bread and come back much more quickly than the old woman would have been able to do. The fact that she was not even seen when returning would raise questions. Many instances have been cited of people being caught in the act of witchcraft, which are often disputed by law as unfounded allegations simply because witchcraft cannot be proven with evidence.

Because it is often old people who are caught in the act of witchcraft, where they would be found naked in the neighbour's yard or on the street corner in the early hours of the morning or midnight, their behaviour would be ascribed to sleepwalking. However, if they were sleepwalking, they should have been fully dressed. In instances when a person who is caught is not old, it is attributed to psychological problems. The question here would be: Why is the psychological status only manifesting at night and not during the day? Witchcraft is an act of the night when innocent people who are targeted are asleep.

Acts of witchcraft do not present clear evidence, and people who report incidents are unable to provide evidence of what they have seen. People who do not believe in witchcraft would argue that those people who claim to have seen a witch are hallucinating, that they could have been under the influence of a drug that made them see things that other people do not see or that are not there. Witchcraft is an art that cannot be explained, as anyone wanting to engage in witchcraft would not do so unless they were born into it and it ran in their blood.

When a person has a traumatic experience or starts behaving in an untoward fashion, the possibility of witchcraft will not be entertained because then there will be casualties and some people may end up getting killed and some arrested. It is not easy to provide evidence about witchcraft, because people who are engaged in it do not talk publicly about it. The only person who may talk about witchcraft is someone who has become tired of being engaged in witchcraft. Such a person would not be able to provide convincing evidence, because it may be assumed that the person was lying about having being engaged in witchcraft, or was psychologically ill.

In *Lonely Hearts*, the way Pebetse, the second wife of Mazwi, hated Hunadi, his first and principal wife, made Hunadi think that Dikeledi, who was Mazwi's stepdaughter and Pebetse's daughter, had been sent by Pebetse to bewitch her and her sons. In the novel, Hunadi says to Dikeledi:

“You Dikeledi, what have you come here for? Did that mother of yours send you to bewitch us?”

“My dear mother, I came here in humble spirit of peace and reconciliation. I have never been your enemy nor conspiring against your well-being. I have always been on your side for I don't like what that man did to you.”

“Are you referring to Mazwi when you say that man?”

“Definitely, he is not my father. He abused me sexually and I paid revenge. I

opened a criminal case against him and he is now on bail. (Nkadimeng, 2004, p. 61)

Hunadi was reminded of an Afrikaans saying which says “*die appel val nie ver van die boom nie*”, translated as “the apple does not fall far from the tree”, an idiom meaning that a child takes after the parent. She thought because Mazwi had left them and settled with Pebetse’s family, that Dikeledi, as part of that family would not like them, only to find out that it was the opposite and that Dikeledi had come to her in good faith.

Mphahlele also demonstrated a strong belief in witchcraft. He grew up in a village which was divided by a river. On the one side were the residences of Christians according to their affiliation – different churches, and on the other side were the tribal kraal communities who were referred to as heathens because of their association with evil, including witchcraft. In African tradition, children are restricted from playing with children whose parents are suspected to be witches. In Mphahlele’s novel, children were barred from walking on the grounds of heathens as they could be easily bewitched:

We were often told there were witches among the ‘heathens; and so we were not to walk on their footprints if we knew they had walked there; we were told to hold our breath when we passed them because they smeared witches’ fat on their bodies; we were told not to stray among their villages because they were addicted to whipping Christians. (p. 4)

This quote reveals that children were brought up believing the same things their elders had grown up believing, which was passed on from generation to generation without being proven correct or incorrect. To illustrate the strong belief in witchcraft, Mphahlele (p. 20) mentions hearing his aunt gossiping:

I overheard Aunt Dora tell somebody about our next-door neighbour's dark practices in witchcraft. She swore she had seen a tortoise in Ma-Legodi's yard. 'One of her creatures', Aunt Dora said. (p. 20)

When Aunt Dora's child fell ill, the following day she found a tortoise in the yard believed to belong to the woman next door whom she suspected of being a witch because of her looks and physical build. The woman was fat and had squint eyes, such that one could not tell whether she was looking straight or sideways. Aunt Dora, believing that the woman had bewitched her child with the tortoise, started shouting and scolding the woman who was seated outside her house, and at the time seemed to know very little about the tortoise or being a witch. Aunt Dora responded by saying:

"And then they sit like brooding hens that seem to know nothing! If my child dies someone will eat her mother. Damn it, these witches make you feel hot between the thighs." (p. 69)

Achebe was not a believer in witchcraft and there was no mention of witchcraft in his novel, except that he was a strong believer in idol worship. He demonstrated this by describing Okonkwo, who was his main character, as having built a small house where he kept the wooden symbols of his personal god and his ancestral spirits. Chielo, also a character in Achebe's novel praised her god by giving her many names:

"the owner of the future, the messenger of earth, the god who cut a man down when his life was sweetest to him." (p. 94)

Thiong'o (2008) also believed in witchcraft. Thiong'o (2008) shows how Waitherero, an old widow with whom Mugo lived after his mother had died, always complained of being

bewitched by people who were jealous of her:

“She was a small woman who always complained that people were after her life; they had put broken bottles and frogs into her stomach; they wanted to put poison in her food or drink.” (p. 7)

There is no mention about witchcraft in Achebe’s novel (1958), which distances him from believing in witchcraft and its dark practices, except that he strongly believed in ancestral worship. This is why his characters have symbols as their gods.

Unlike Thiong’o (2008), a Kenyan, and Nkadimeng (2004) and Mphahlele (1959), both South Africans who believed in witchcraft, Achebe, a Nigerian, does not mention witchcraft giving the impression that it did not exist in his country. It is possible that Achebe does not write about it as he did not view it as an intriguing element. This may be because it is normal for a person in his country to be a witch, and they can practice in broad daylight, as is depicted in certain films.

Music and dance. Singing and dancing are integral to African culture and tradition and go hand in glove in that they cannot be separated from the other. Singing is always accompanied by dancing, especially when the people who are dancing are in a celebratory mood. Mulaudzi (2012) supported this statement by arguing that:

Singing, often accompanied by various styles of dancing, reflects cultural and social aspects which cannot be ignored in a society. These aspects are part of the cultural world view. (p. 64)

Mulaudzi (2012) further indicated that moral, ethical and aesthetic values are elements of the African worldview that are often expressed through music. When people are happy, even if there is nothing to celebrate, they will sing songs that are intended for celebrations. They

sing cultural songs accompanied by dancing in African traditional style in time with the rhythm of the song, which is accompanied by the beating of the drum and ululating (Mulaudzi, 2012).

Figure 11 and Figure 12 show groups performing the Khekhapa traditional dance, to the rhythm of a song and accompanied by the beating of the drums. It is evident that these dancers are familiar with the song, and anyone wishing to join them would not be able follow the rhythm in the same way as they are doing due to lack of practice. There is a saying in Northern Sotho culture: *“Lešaedi ga le hlokege košeng”* which means that “in every dancing there will always be someone who does not dance in the same step”.

Rhythm and action in these types of performance play a significant role. The rhythm of the two dances in Figure 21 and Figure 22 differ in the type of the song and the beating of the drum, which is why the two groups display different postures in their dances. In Figure 21, the performers who are all women, are in full swing dancing to the beat of the drums.



Figure 231. Khekhapa dance performed by Leswika la Motheo Cultural Group from Mohlatlareng Village under Tzaneen Municipality, Mopani District (September 30, 2009)

In Figure 22, the group is just entering the venue of where the rhythm and action are still going to be performed. This group is alerting the audience that they are entering the scene and the song is used to introduce the group to the audience.



Figure 22. Khekhapa dance performed by Mashishimale Cultural Group from Mashishimale Village under Ba-Phalaborwa Municipality, Mopani District (September 30, 2009)

In Nkadimeng's novel (p. 47), the community of which Mazwi was a part were dancing and singing on the day that Mazwi paid the fine for beating up his wife, Hunadi. They were not just singing and dancing for the sake of it, but because they were happy that they were going to enjoy the meat from the fines that Mazwi had paid. Because, music and dance go together, a person cannot just sing standing or seated while in a happy mood. Once a song starts, even when people are seated, as long as the atmosphere is happy, they will move out of their comfort zone and start dancing to the tune.

In *Things Fall Apart*, Achebe talks about music and dance as being inseparable. In this instance, music was accompanied by dance for the occasion when a man was taking one of the titles of his clan. This was a happy occasion in which the community members were feasting.

In a different scene, when the men of Umuofia were accompanying Ikemefuna to a place supposedly called home, he remembered the song that his mother used to sing to him

while he was still a little boy. He sang the song in his mind and walked to its beat:

Eze elina, elina!

Sala

Eze ilikwa ya

Ikwaba akwa oligholi

Ebe Danda nechi eze

Ebe Uzuzu nete egwu

Sala (p. 53)

While singing this song, he was thinking of his mother, and whether he would find her dead or alive. If while singing, the song ended on the right foot, it meant that his mother was alive and well, and if it ended on the left foot, it meant that she was dead. When he sang the song for the first time, it ended on the right foot which meant that the mother was alive. He sang it a second time, and it ended on the left foot, but because he could not bear the thought of his mother being dead, he dismissed the second thought and went with the first one that his mother was alive and well.

Warriors sing war songs when they are summoned to the *kgoro* by a war horn, and wear their full war attire. This type of song can only be sung by warriors when they go to war. The rising dust would evoke a mood of war, and women and children would not be allowed anywhere near as is witnessed in Nkadimeng's *Lonely Hearts* (p. 42).

In Thiong'o's *A Grain of Wheat*, only revolutionary songs were sung and also danced to. During the Uhuru celebration, the villagers who gathered at the gathering place at the Rung'ei Market were chanting revolutionary songs.

Villagers were forcefully removed from their village into a new place that they did not like. They were strictly prohibited from even going out to look for food. People started dying

of hunger, and children started crying. However, none of them died because their mothers offered themselves to the soldiers so that they would be given some food to feed the children. One of the songs they sang, that moved most of the villagers, was about Wambuku. The song was sung in line with the pain they had felt when removed from their village against their will and their huts were burned down:

When I remember Wambuku
A woman who was beautiful so
How she raised her eyes to heaven
Tears from her heart freely flow.
Pray true
Praise Him true
For He is ever the same God
Who will forget the sun and the dust today?
And the trench I dug with blood!
When they pushed me into the trench,
Tears from my heart freely flowed.” (Thiong’o, 2008, p. 158)

Guitar playing is an art that not everyone can master and requires a great deal of passion and enthusiasm. Thiong’o (2008) shows how Karanja, who was skilled at playing the guitar, was loved by women for his music. His playing would be accompanied by singing in time with the strumming of the strings. Karanja loved music so much that he had his guitar with him wherever he went. The guitar was his companion and wherever he sat to rest, he would take out his guitar and start playing. Thiong’o describes Karanja’s love for the guitar by stating that:

Warui expected much from her son. She looked up to him as the man who would take care of her in her old age. From an early age Karanja had, however, shown tendencies

that were not the normal attributes of a hardworking son. He played the guitar, and ran after women. (p. 244)

Decorative art. Decorative art is a natural ability amongst most Africans. They develop the skill so that they can use it during celebratory periods such as Christmas, when they decorate their surroundings, including the huts they live in.

Painting. Painting is an art requiring distinct abilities and cannot be done by everybody. Decorative patterns are painted on the walls and etched on the floor. Cow dung is used to make the ground on the floor look clean and free of dust. Women like to display their skill for decorating.

In *Things Fall Apart* (p. 33), Okonkwo's compound was surrounded by a wall painted with red earth. Achebe (1958) shows Okonkwo's wives scrubbing the walls in preparation for the festival that was three days away. They scrubbed the walls and the huts with red earth until they reflected the light. They then drew patterns on the walls in white, yellow and dark green. Okonkwo's wives were carrying out an African tradition for when feasting days were approaching, clearing everything to make their homes clean and attractive.

This tradition prevails in the present era. When Christmas is approaching, people make a point of scrubbing the walls of their houses and even applying paint so that the houses look beautiful and striking to the people who are passing near their yards. This is evidenced by Figure 43 where the walls of a house have been painted using different soil colours. Nowadays, though not applying cow dung and different soil colours, as the contemporary houses are built with cement and bricks, people still use paint to beautify their houses and fence walls. The preference in terms of the colours ranges from beautiful diluted paints by means of mixing the colours to bright colours such as green, pink, yellow and purple to site a few examples.



Figure 43. Walls painted in preparation for celebrations in Mohlatlareng Village in the Greater Tzaneen Municipality of Mopani District, Limpopo (October 17, 2016)

As an indication that they were happy for the feast, Okonkwo's wives painted themselves with cam wood and drew beautiful black patterns on their stomachs and backs. Today, body painting continues to be seen in many celebrations, such as soccer and rugby games, where supporters paint themselves in the colours of the country of the team they are supporting. In Figure 24, a soccer supporter's face is painted in the colours of the South African flag to show his support and love for his country's team.



Figure 24. Soccer supporter's face painted with the South African flag

https://www.google.co.za/search?q=painted+soccer+fan+celebration+gif&rlz=1C2AVNA_enZA588ZA588&biw=1366&bih=662&source=lnms&tbm=isch&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwiAwZeP0LLSAhUoKsAKHYIOcdIQ_AU

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. In contrast, Okonkwo's wives painted their stomachs and backs as is evidenced in Achebe (1958):

They then set about painting themselves with cam wood and drawing beautiful black patterns on their stomachs and on their backs. The children were also decorated, especially their hair, which was shaved in beautiful patterns. (p. 33)

Figure 25 shows Xhosa women with white paint on their faces to show that they are celebrating, because white symbolises joy and happiness. Judging by their attire, it could be a cultural celebration. In contrast, Okonkwo's wives painted their stomachs and backs as is evidenced in Achebe (1958):

They then set about painting themselves with cam wood and drawing beautiful black patterns on their stomachs and on their backs. The children were also decorated, especially their hair, which was shaved in beautiful patterns. (p. 33)



Figure 25. Xhosa tribal face painting

https://www.google.co.za/search?q=xhosa+face+painting&rlz=1C2AVNA_enZA588ZA588&biw=1366&bih=662&source=lnms&tbn=isch&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwiwp5_I1bLSAhWoB8AKHXgRBScQ_AUIBigBo
n.

Beading

Beadwork as an art form: African women wear a lot of beaded items during celebrations. Figure 26 shows different types of beads that are worn by women of different African cultures. Earrings can also be made from beads to provide finishing touches to traditional dress. Beading requires skill to be able to arrange the beads in a particular pattern. Figure 26 shows the different shapes worked into the pieces. The shapes such as equilateral triangles, isosceles triangles and rectangles demonstrate the beadworker's mathematical aptitude.



Figure 26. Beadwork created by women in Letlhareng Village in the Greater Letaba Municipality of Mopani District, Limpopo (September 13, 2017).



Figure 27. Beads worn by a traditional healer at Port Elizabeth Airport, Eastern Cape (October 1, 2017)

The women in traditional attire can wear a beaded head band, necklace, bands on the upper and lower parts of the arm, and wrist bands. There is also beadwork that can be worn around

the waist and across the shoulder. Beads may also be worn outside of celebrations, e.g. to show that a person is a traditional healer – such beads are different from those worn for beauty during celebrations, unlike the geometrical and patterned shapes used for celebrations, traditional healers' beads are strung in a linear form with alternating colours (Figure 27).

People wearing the type of the beading shown in Figure 26 are traditional healers who have undergone training as traditional doctors. This and other types of beadwork – which differs according to the culture to which the traditional healer belongs – distinguishes traditional healers from the general populace. The beadwork shown in Figure 27 is not discussed by the four authors selected for this study.

Among the four selected authors under comparison, Thiong'o (p. 264) is the only author who demonstrates a passion for beadwork. Thiong'o writes about beadwork when describing the patterns Gikonyo is carving on the chair that he is making for Mumbi as a wedding gift. He was also going to decorate the seat of the chair with beads in the pattern of a river and a canal. Alongside the canal he would bead patterns of the jembe or a spade.

Beadwork is not done by just anyone who is interested in beading, as this type of activity is generally done by a group of women. Just as uninitiated boys would not be found among men at the *kgoro*, uninitiated girls would not be found beading with other women wherever they are gathering. Uninitiated girls are not supposed to take part in the activities of women as they cannot get married. No man would want to have a relationship with a girl who had not been taught how to behave as a woman. An uninitiated girl is called *lethumaša*, which is the opposite of *lešoboro*.

Carving and crafting. Other forms of artworks visible in Thiong'o's novel are the art of carving and crafting furniture out of wood. When he was at Timoro hospital, Gikonyo thought about his days at the detention camp at Wamumu and was reminded of his idea to craft a wedding gift for his wife, Mumbi:

It was in Mweya, on the same day, that he again seriously thought of carving a stool from wood, a wedding gift for Mumbi. The idea gradually took concrete shape as he worked in the sun amidst the river-decay and the muddy earth. He would carve the stool from a Muiri stem, a hardwood that grew around Kerinyanga, and Nyandarwa hills. The seat would rest on three legs curved into three grim-faced figures, sweating under a weight. On the seat he would bead a pattern, representing a river and a canal. A jembe or a spade would lie beside the canal. (p. 264)

In *Lonely Hearts*, Nkadimeng mentions the use of a wooden dish, similar to the one in Figure 28, when speaking about the utensil used for carrying the bones of the slaughtered goat for the naming ritual of Jabulani as *Ngwato*²⁶ after he graduated from initiation school.



Figure 28. Carved wooden bowl photographed in Tlhabine Village in the Mogoboya area of the Greater Tzaneen municipality of Mopani District, Limpopo (March 31, 2017)

²⁶ *Ngwato* is a praise name that Jabulani acquired after graduating from the initiation.

The container is crafted from wood and used as a plate. These wooden plates are still used by some Africans who have preserved their heritage. The wooden dish may not be the same in all African countries or even in South Africa because it may differ from culture to culture. The dish displayed in Figure 28 is an example of the *Batlabine ba Mogoboya* which is common amongst the Basotho speaking tribes, though differing in its naming.

Achebe (p. 13) makes reference to Okonkwo having a wooden symbol of his personal god and the ancestral spirits, kept in the medicine house or the shrine, which would have been carved from a tree. Thiong'o, tells of how Gikonyo thought about carving a thin man, with hard lines on the face, shoulders and head bent, supporting the weight of the seat. The right hand would stretch to link with that of a woman, also with hard lines on her face. The third figure would be of a child on whose head or shoulders the other two hands of the man and the woman would meet.

The art of making a traditional broom out of grass is described by Mphahlele (p. 3), when speaking about his grandmother making one. The grass broom would have looked similar to those in Figure 29 which are still made today. People at Marabastad would sweep their houses and the surrounding yard with brooms.



Figure 29. Grass brooms at Lenyeny Township in the Greater Tzaneen Municipality of Mopani District, Limpopo (May 1, 2017).

Africans craft flutes, musical instruments made from bamboo or, in the case of Achebe's novel, elephant grass (p. 25). Flutes are used by African men in men's traditional dance and music, accompanied by the beating of the drums made from a hollowed-out log and covered with animal skin.

The original flutes were made from bamboo, commonly referred to as cane. Cane is usually found in the deep blue silent waters of big rivers, but many of these rivers are drying up due to lack of heavy rains, and therefore cane is becoming an endangered species. However, this does not prevent an African man from coming up with an alternative to prevent the culture from dying; therefore, they improvise using copper pipes like the flutes pictured in Figure 30 that have been covered in coloured wrappers:

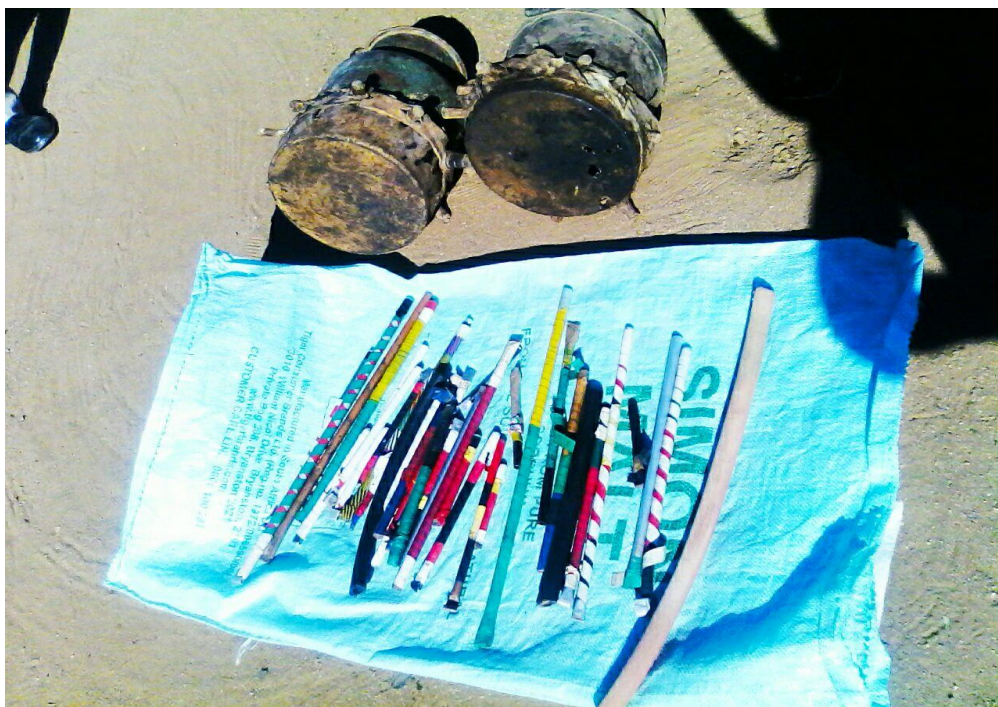


Figure 30. Drums made from tree logs and different types of copper flute at Motšeketla Village in the Greater Letaba Municipality of Mopani District, Limpopo (April 27, 2017).

Achebe (p. 17) explains how Okonkwo's father, Unoka, who died from swelling of the stomach, took his flute with him so that it could keep him company when he was left alone to

die in the bushes because his sickness was an abomination. When a person dies of a sickness that is considered an abomination, he is not to be buried or given a grave. Not even his bones may be buried after his body had decomposed.

Achebe illustrates Unoka's love for music when writing about how he hated the sight of people who would talk about war as he was a coward. When there was talk of going to war, he would change the subject and start talking about music, and his face would beam:

He could hear in his mind's ear the blood-stirring and intricate rhythms of the *ekwe* and the *udu* and the *ogene*, and he could hear his own flute weaving in and out of them, decorating them with a colourful plaintive tune. The total effect was gay and brisk, but if one picked out the flute as it went up and down and then broke up into short snatches, one saw that there was sorrow and grief there. (p. 6)

This passage illustrates Unoka's ability to mix the sound of his flute with the sounds of different musical instruments, the *ekwe*, the *udu* and the *ogene*. He was imagining the interesting music they would make when played together.

While Achebe focuses on the flute, Thiong'o brings in the guitar as a musical instrument, when he shows that Karanja loved playing the guitar from an early age. The guitar took up most of his time and was his companion at all times. Women loved him for the music he used to play. He would keep on playing it until his mother told him a story to illustrate the fate of every idle person. The story made him remember his mother and in times of agony it made him long for her.

Music in the African traditional context should not be used to keep people busy when others are working. It is meant to entertain people during weekends and when there is nothing to be done, as in during a drought seasons or when there is too much rain for people to go out

to the fields.

Making sandals out of tyres as outlined by Thiong'o (p. 241) is an African tradition. Thiong'o has Mugo appear at the gathering where they wanted Karanja to confess that he was the one who had betrayed Kihika by selling him to the White man. Mugo appeared unnoticed wearing a dirty coat and sandals made from an old lorry tyre, similar to those pictured in Figure 31. These sandals are still popular today.



Figure 31: Sandals made from tyres (Photographed in Lenyenye Township in the Greater Tzaneen municipality of Mopani District, Limpopo on April 27, 2017)

Rather than buying items, Africans prefer to make whatever they can using natural resources or recyclable products (such as the shoes made from tyres in Figure 31). Tyre shoes were commonly worn by men, because African women were generally barefooted. Recently, however, due to changes in lifestyle, women are also seen wearing them in casual situations.

Artwork continues to be practised among Africans who are passionate about it. Some people make a living by making artworks and selling to the public, or even extending it into a commercial business to reach a bigger market.

Conclusion

Based on the discussion of occupational folk life, it is evident that all four selected authors were familiar with stock and crop farming, though their focus varies from one book to another. Crop farming differs from country to country depending on the staple food for that

country. South Africans farm with mielie crops while the yam seems to be the staple food for Nigerians. Kenya farms with potatoes and beans, though there is mention of mielies as well.

The discussion showed that of the four authors, crop farming is dominant in Achebe's and Thiong'o's works, while stock farming is dominant in the works of Nkadimeng and Mphahlele. Where stock farming is dominant, crop farming is practiced on a minimal scale and vice versa. A hut is regarded as a common structure for a house in the lives of the characters in all four of the selected authors' books. This chapter reiterates the multifaceted nature of folklore in that it touches on many disciplines such as geography, mathematics, agriculture and art.

Chapter 7: Oral Literature

The focus of this chapter is on oral literature, commonly referred to as oral tradition. Oral literature, as an aspect of folklore, encompasses everything that is depicted in the schematic presentation of the four categories of folklore in Figure 1 that is on page 28. This study did not include all aspects shown in Figure 1, but focused rather on traditional prose and some areas of traditional poetry.

Folk Narratives

Folk narratives are stories or tales that are told to children by the elders in the family. In terms of African cultural practices and traditions, the grandmothers sit with the young ones around the fire. This is the right time for storytelling to take place. Ntuli (2013) concurred with this statement by indicating that performances of folktales usually occurred after the daily chores had been completed, around the fire in the evening. According to Ntuli (2013) the time and place of performances in IsiZulu folktales did not take place randomly. The performance of folktales occurred at a specific time and in a specific place because it had specific functions to fulfil and a message to deliver to a certain group of people, particularly children (Ntuli, 2013, p. 89).

Figure 32 depicts stories being narrated by an old woman while the children listen. Usually, folk tales are narrated by old women, though in certain circumstances one would find a folk tale being narrated by old men who will be narrating to young boys. This particular image shows storytelling taking place during the day, although typically it would occur in the evening around a fire.



Figure 32. Storytelling for the children. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Storytelling> (retrieved June 3, 2017)

In African traditional custom, these tales or stories are told in the evening to help keep children awake for longer so that they do not go to sleep at the same time as the chickens. In this way, they can urinate and empty their bowels before bedtime. Besides preventing bedwetting, stories have moral lessons that instil and promote good behaviour in children and encourage them to grow up as responsible adults. These stories are always informative, either discouraging bad behaviour or encouraging good behaviour. Mashige (2002) agreed with the notion of giving moral lessons to the young ones:

Folktales create space within which cultural identities are not only formed but are also facilitated, articulated and operationalised. Against this background folktales have to be seen as one of the vehicles through which societies transmit their moral and religious values in an enjoyable but instructive manner. It is perhaps germane to point out that folktales are generally narrated to the younger members of society, children to be specific, because their primary objective is to help in the shaping of children's

characters.” (p. 54)

As can be seen in Figure 32, the narrator or the performer is usually an old woman – a grandmother or any other elderly person. During the storytelling session, the narrator or the performer is the centre of attraction, and the children are her audience. The performer uses a special opening formula to capture the children’s attention. She would usually begin with “once upon a time”, or “long, long ago”. Ntuli (2013) indicated that these opening words would stir up expectations within the audience, and arouse in them the interest to hear more about what happened in the remote past.

In Achebe’s rendering of the story of how the tortoise got its bumpy shell, Ekwefu starts by saying,

“Once upon a time,” she began, “all the birds were invited to a feast in the sky. They were very happy and began to prepare themselves for the great day. They painted their bodies with red cam wood and drew beautiful patterns on them with *uli*.

“Tortoise saw all these preparations and soon discovered what it all meant. Nothing that happened in the world of the animal ever escaped his notice; he was full of cunning. As soon as he heard of the great feast in the sky his throat began to itch at the very thought. There was a famine in those days and Tortoise had not eaten a good meal for two moons. His body rattled like a piece of dry stick in his empty shell. So he began to plan how he would go to the sky.”

“But he had no wings,” said Ezinma.

“Be patient,” replied her mother. “That is the story. Tortoise had no wings, but he went to the birds and asked to be allowed to go with them.

“‘We know you too well,’ said the birds when they had heard him. ‘You are full of cunning and you are ungrateful. If we allow you to come with us you will soon begin

your mischief.’

“‘You do not know me,’ said Tortoise. ‘I am a changed man. I have learnt that a man who makes trouble for others is also making it for himself.’

“Tortoise had a sweet tongue, and within a short time all the birds agreed that he was a changed man, and they each gave him a feather, with which he made two wings.

“At last the great day came and Tortoise was the first to arrive at the meeting-place. When all the birds had gathered together, they set off in a body. Tortoise was very happy and voluble as he flew among the birds, and was soon chosen as the man to speak for the party because he was the great orator.

“There is one important thing which we must not forget,’ he said as they flew on their way. ‘When people are invited to a great feast like this, they take new names for the occasion. Our hosts in the sky will expect us to honour this old-age custom.’

“None of the birds had heard of this custom but they knew that Tortoise, in spite of his failings in other directions, was a widely-travelled man who knew the customs of different peoples. And so they each took a new name. When they had all taken, Tortoise also took one. He was to be called *All of you*.

“At last the party arrived in the sky and their hosts were very happy to see them. Tortoise stood up in his many coloured plumage and thanked them for their invitation. His speech was so eloquent that all the birds were glad they had brought him, and nodded their heads in approval of all he said. Their hosts took him to the king of the birds, especially as he looked somewhat different from the others.

“After kola nut had been presented and eaten, the people of the sky set before their guests the most delectable dishes Tortoise had ever seen or dreamt of. The soup was brought out hot from the fire and in the very pot in which it had been cooked. It

was full of meat and fish. Tortoise began to sniff aloud. There was pounded yam and also yam pottage cooked with palm-oil and fresh fish. There were also pots of palm-wine. When everything had been set before the guests, one of the people of the sky came forward and tasted a little from each pot. He then invited the birds to eat. But Tortoise jumped to his feet and asked: ‘For whom have you prepared this feast?’

“‘For all of you,’ replied the man.

“Tortoise turned to the birds and said: ‘You remember that my name is *All of you*. The custom here is to serve the spokesman first and the others later. They will serve you when I have eaten.’

“He began to eat and the birds grumbled angrily. The people of the sky thought it must be their custom to leave all the food for their king. And so Tortoise ate the best part of the food and then drank two pots of palm-wine, so that he was full of food and drink and his body filled out in his shell.

“The birds gathered round to eat what was left and to peck at the bones he had thrown all about the floor. Some of them were too angry to eat. They chose to fly home on an empty stomach. But before they left each took back the feather he had lent to Tortoise. And there he stood in his hard shell full of food and wine but without any wings to fly home. He asked the birds to take a message for his wife, but they all refused. In the end Parrot, who had felt angrier than the others, suddenly changed his mind and agreed to take the message.

“‘Tell my wife,’ said Tortoise, ‘to bring out all the soft things in my house and cover the compound with them so that I can jump down from the sky without very great danger.’

“Parrot promised to deliver the message, and then flew away. But when he reached Tortoise’s house he told his wife to bring out all the hard things in the house.

And so she brought out her husband's hoes, machetes, spears, guns and even cannon. Tortoise looked down from the sky and saw his wife bringing things out, but it was too far to see what they were. When all seemed ready he let himself go. He fell and fell and fell until he began to fear that he would never stop falling. And then like the sound of his cannon he crashed on the compound."

"Did he die?" asked Ezinma.

"No," replied Ekwefi. "His shell broke into pieces. But there was a great medicine-man in the neighborhood. Tortoise's wife sent for him and he gathered all the bits of shell and stuck them together. That is why Tortoise's shell is not smooth."

"There is no song in the story," Ezinma pointed out.

"No," said Ekwefi. "I shall think of another one with a song. But it is your turn now." (p. 85)

As a custom in storytelling, the story has to be interrupted by the singing of a song, which was not the case with Ekwefi's story. Ezinma started telling her a story to "buy" the one that had been told by her mother. It is tradition during storytelling to take turns until the other party is unable to buy the story by telling a new story as they would be exhausted. Ezinma started by saying:

"Once upon a time" Ezinma began. "Tortoise and Cat went to wrestle against Yams – no, that is not the beginning. Once upon a time there was a great famine in the land of animals. Everybody was lean except Cat, who was fat and whose body shone as if oil was rubbed on it ..." (Achebe, 1958, p. 88)

Unfortunately, she could not finish telling her story as the night was interrupted by the voice of Chielo, the priestess of Agbala, prophesying. When Chielo was possessed by the spirit

of her gods she would prophesy (p. 88). That night she was prophesying and addressing her prophesy and greetings to Okonkwo, calling the name of Ezinma, who was Okonkwo's daughter.

In addition, Achebe (p. 47) tells how Okonkwo would sit with the boys in his *obi* and tell them stories of the land – masculine stories of violence and bloodshed. Nwoye, the eldest of Okonkwo's boys, knew that it was right to be masculine and violent, but somehow he preferred stories that his mother used to tell, and which he had no doubt she still told her younger children – stories of the tortoise and his wily ways, and of the *eneke-nti-oba* bird who challenged the whole world to a wrestling contest and was finally thrown by the cat. He remembered the story her mother often told of the quarrel between Earth and Sky:

“Long long ago, Sky withheld rain for seven years, until crops withered and the dead could not be buried because the hoes broke on the stony Earth. At last Vulture was sent to plead with Sky, and to soften his heart with a song of suffering of the sons of men.”

Whenever Nwoye's mother sang this song he felt carried away to the distant scene in the sky where Vulture, Earth's emissary, sang for mercy.

“At last Sky was moved to pity, and he gave to Vulture rain wrapped in leaves of coco-yam. But as he flew home his long talon pierced the leaves and the rain fell as it had never fallen before. And so heavily did it rain on Vulture that he did not return to deliver the message but flew to a distant land, from where he had espied a fire. And when he got there he found it was a man making a sacrifice. He warmed himself in the fire and ate the entrails.” (Achebe, 1958, p. 48)

Those were the kind of stories that Nwoye loved, but he realised that they were for foolish women and children. He knew that his father wanted him to be a man, and he pretended that he no longer cared for women's stories. When he did this he realised that his father was

pleased, and no longer rebuked him or beat him. Okonkwo would tell Nwoye and Ikemefuna stories about tribal wars, or how, years ago, he had stalked his victim, overpowered him and obtained his first human head. As they listened to Okonkwo's stories, each of his three wives would bring a bowl of foo-foo and a bowl of soup to him. Okonkwo would taste from each bowl and then pass two shares to Nwoye and Ikemefuna.

Achebe (p. 30) suggests that Ikemefuna had a boundless supply of folk tales. Even those which Nwoye already knew were told with a new freshness and the local flavour of a different clan. Nwoye remembered all the stories until the end of his life. He even remembered how he laughed when Ikemefuna told him that the cob with only a few scattered grains is called *eze-agadi-nwayi* (the teeth of an old woman). Nwoye's mind went immediately to Nwayieke, an old woman who lived near the udala tree. She had about three teeth and was always smoking her pipe.

In every game there is a player and a spectator. In the case of storytelling, the player is the performer and the spectators are the listeners who are children. Ntuli (2013) demonstrated the two elements that are vital in the performance of oral art, when she said,

Much as every game needs players and spectators, performance requires the presence of a performer and an audience to appreciate it. The performer and the audience cannot be separated. Without these two elements, performance would be dead; in order for a performance to be alive and interesting, there must be interaction between the performer and her audience. (p. 91)

Ntuli (2013) explained how story telling as an oral art had to be performed:

At the beginning of the narration, the performer commences by placing the tale in the remote, fictitious world of the past and activating the children's imagination. This is made clear as she starts with the opening formula, *kwakukhona* (once upon a time). The

practice, common in folktales about trees and animals, wild and domestic, indulging in conversation and behaving like human beings, aims to enhance the imaginative value and the plot of the story, to suit the minds of children and to test the oratorical powers of the narrator (Vilakazi, 1945, p. 191). (p. 92)

The art of performing while telling a story, awakes in the children a desire to listen to the story until the end. They stay awake because they are curious to know what is going to happen at the end. As the performer tells the story, the tone of voice, facial expressions and body language have to be entrancing. For instance, if the story to be told is about a lion, the performer has to make the roaring sound of the lion when it sees an intruder in its territory and is preparing for an attack. The meow of a cat should be performed for a story that is about a cat. The performance interests the children more than anything else in storytelling.

In storytelling, language plays a major role in sharpening children's' minds. Storytelling can help learners with language acquisition in problem-solving and cause-and-effect stories. It helps learners to think chronologically and come up with solutions for different situations. Sivasuramaniam (2013) maintained that language in a South African schools' context could serve as a basis for operationalising folktales in the classrooms through the use of an "expressivist-process approach", which encourages learners to initiate their emotional involvement with the language and to exploit it for creative and imaginative use.

Stories are not told for the sake of telling a story. They are intended for teaching children lessons and encouraging good behaviour, to be attentive and to be good listeners when someone is talking. The story of the Tortoise is intended to teach children not to be greedy in life, as greed does not pay, while at the same time it keeps them entertained. Ntuli (2013) concurred with this view by indicating that:

Performance was used to inculcate in children's' minds the fact that different tasks for

different age groups are to be performed at different times of the day. The notion of the completion of tasks at the right time urged children to look forward to being entertained in the evenings and, in a way, instilled some sense of responsibility. Children knew that if they performed their tasks they would be rewarded by being entertained. (p. 90)

Similarly, Thiong'o (p. 244) mentions in his book the story of a boy who was too lazy to go and plough in the field with his mother. It was the only thing the family could do to put food on the table. The boy would remain at home polishing his shoes while his mother went to the fields. In the evening, on coming returning home, his mother would cook food, while the boy played with his friends in the streets. He would then bring his friends home and praise his mother's cooking. His mother would serve food for him and his friends.

One day, his mother did not cook the delicious foods. On his coming home with his friends, while still praising his mother's good cooking, his mother went into the kitchen and brought back plates each with a pair of polished shoes on them and told him that she had not been to the fields that day but had remained home polishing shoes. That brought him shame and thereafter, he went with her and helped her in the fields. This story teaches children that people need to work for their living, not to be given everything without making a contribution. In Thiong'o's novel, Wairimu told the story as follows:

"Once, long ago," she would begin, "there was a poor woman who had only one son. Njoki, for that was her name, wanted her son to realize that they were poor and could only get enough to eat by working hard. Every morning her son woke up and polished his shoes and ironed his clothes carefully and then went to his playmates in the shops and streets. In the evenings he would come back with a crowd of young men and women, and would ask his mother for food. Njoki was a generous woman and liked young people in the house.

“She would give them food and tell them stories. But every day she grew sadder because her son would never take a jembe or a panga to the shamba. Because she did not want to embarrass her son, she always hid her sadness whenever there were people in the house. Njoki was a woman with a good heart and people always praised her generosity and hard work. This pleased her son, because he was really proud of his mother and people called him son of Njoki.

“One day he brought home three great friends from a distant village. He had visited them many times and was always lavished with food and drinks. He in turn talked about his home and had often promised them a similar treat should they ever visit him. That is why he now asked his mother to treat them to a feast. Njoki lit a good fire. She laid a clean tablecloth on the table. She brought plates and spoons and wiped them clean. Then she went back to the kitchen. Her son was very happy and talked about his mother and her cooking. Njoki came back from the kitchen with three plates and on each plate was a pair of shining shoes. She put the plates and the shoes on the table.

‘I am afraid today I did not go to the shamba,’ she said. ‘I spent the whole day polishing these shoes, and so this is all there is to eat.’

“Her son could hardly talk for shame. The following day he took a panga and a jembe and never left the field until sunset.”

“Aah, that is meant for me”, Karanja would say. “All right, tomorrow I shall come to the shamba with you.”

As indicated earlier, a story is never told for the sake of telling a story. It is intended to give children life lessons. This was why Karanja realised at the end that the story was intended for him and that he needed to work to be able to eat. . Karanja had listened to his mother telling him the story until the end, and then realised that the story he was listening to had been directed

at him. He felt so ashamed that the following day he went to the shamba with his mother (p. 244).

Mphahlele (p. 6) starts his storytelling in a different way with a different introduction from those of Achebe and Thiong'o. This story is told by old Segone described by Mphahlele as a great storyteller and good at spicing up the stories:

“It was spring. You know what it is when plants are full of new life. Ploughing was beginning. You know how air tickles your nostrils and goes right into the marrow – and then you know you're part of that which dies and yet doesn't die. I must tell you Thema was one of us, from a Christian family: yes, his mother and father were married in church. Trouble began when this lad went to the cities of the white man. The way that boy carried himself made me thank my gods that I never worked for a white man in my life.

“Did you go to church in the city?” we asked him.

“Please don't ask me any more about church,” the lad said.

We were sitting here at this same fire-place. I was sitting where Modise is now, and Thema sat in the place next to Riba there.

“You know, Father,” Thema said, like a man with a heathen devil in him, “Moruti Foster was here, I remember hearing him say Christ died on the cross for us all, and he was our brother. I remember that revival meeting, too.”

And then Thema turned round and said men were not brothers in the city. The Black man must enter the white man's house through the back door. The Black man does most of the dirty work. When a white man who hasn't gone far in school is given such work he says *I'm not a kaffir!* Black man cleans the streets but mustn't walk freely on the pavement; Black man must build houses for the white man but cannot live in them; black man cooks the white man's food but eats what is left over. Don't listen to

anyone bluff you and say Black and white are brothers.

And the lad shocked us by saying, “I don’t know why Jesus Christ wasted his time teaching mankind!” (Mphahlele, p.6)

The story’s content was not traditional as it involved Jesus Christ and discussed how people of different colours were living with each other in the cities. However, the introduction was traditional and the place where the storytelling took place at the fireplace. This suggests that although Mphahlele grew up in the cities and knew city life, his tradition still controlled his destiny. Mphahlele (p. 25), while living in the cities, shows how he misses life at Maupaneng where they would sit around the communal fire and tell each other stories until the cocks crowed. He explained how houses at Maupaneng were built, unlike those in Marabastad. In Maupaneng, children would be able to visit the neighbours and sit around the fire and listen to stories being told.

Both Achebe’s (1958) and Thiong’o’s (2008) stories have similar introductions of “once upon a time,” and “once, long ago” to grab the children’s attention so that they would be quiet and attentive. Mphahlele (1959) has his own stylish way of introducing a story that is different from the other two authors.

Telling stories in African tradition serves to instil good morals in children. The story in Achebe’s book teaches children not to be greedy in life as greed will not take them anywhere and the one in Thiong’o’s book teaches the children that one must work to earn a living, and that laziness does not pay.

Of the four selected authors, Nkadimeng is the only author who is silent about storytelling.

Folk Songs

There are different kinds of folk songs, including war songs, marriage songs, lullabies, songs for work, and initiation songs. War songs are sung when men are going for war. Marriage songs

are sung during marriage celebrations. Lullabies are sung to make infants sleep or stop crying. Initiation songs are sung by initiates only. All these types of songs are traditional folk songs. In the African traditional belief system, people sing when they fight, when they work, when they are happy, including when a child is born and during marriages, during initiations and when there is death in the family.

True Africans will never abandon their tradition and culture for something that is foreign and destructive (Cloete and Maqadzhe, 2005, p. 35). Achebe (p. 175) shows how Okonkwo, after he and the other five men were released from prison, lay on his bamboo bed thinking of the treatment they had received in the White man's court, and recalled the good old days when Umuofia would go on war, the noblest being the war against Isike. In those days, Okudo would sing a war song in a way that no other man could. It was said that Okudo was not a fighter but when he sang, his voice would turn every man into a lion.

Achebe (1958) mentions the singing of folk songs when there is work to do. He writes of marriage songs, like this one:

“If I hold her hand
She says, ‘don’t touch!’
If I hold her foot
She says, ‘Don’t touch!’
But when I hold her waist-beads
She pretends not to know.” (p. 104)

Marriage is for two people who are in a relationship that started with courting. When the male partner touches the female partner on parts of the body that do not convey feelings of intimacy, the female partner will refuse to be touched. However, when their relationship moves to an intimate level, they can touch each other anywhere and both enjoy the feeling.

The previous song indicates that the female partner refuses to be held by the hand or the foot, but does not refuse when she is touched by the waist beads, because the waist is an intimate place and both she and the male partner would sense the intimacy. The two partners would then know that they loved each other and, after courting for a while, the marriage negotiations would begin.

There are also folk songs that are sung while working in a group. The following song was sung by a group of young men who had been arrested by the District Commissioner who took over Umuofia while Okonkwo was still in exile in his motherland. The song goes like this:

“*Kotma* of the ash buttocks,
He is fit to be a slave,
The white man has no sense,
He is fit to be a slave.” (Achebe, 1958, p. 154)

Thiong’o (p. 158) tells of the agonising experience when the people were forcefully removed from their village, and made to dig a trench surrounding the area where they were placed. Anybody who raised their back or slowed down was beaten by soldiers and home guards. Those who could not bear the pain died in the process. Wambuku, died and was buried in a trench. Shortly afterwards, they composed a song about Wambuku that moved everybody when it was sung. The song was sung while they were busy digging the trench:

“When I remember Wambuku
A woman who was beautiful so
How she raised her eyes to heaven
Tears from the heart freely flow
Pray true

Praise Him true

For He is ever the same God.

Who will forget the sun and the dust today

And the trench I dug with blood!

When they pushed me into the trench,

Tears from my heart freely flowed.” (Thiong’o, 2008, p. 158)

The song could be regarded as a dirge as they were not happy or rejoicing when they were singing it, but were remembering how Wambuku had been killed and buried. The singers were mourning the departed soul of their friend.

During rainy seasons, immediately after the rain starts, children would take off their clothes and run outside and sing to welcome the rain. They were so excited to see the rain coming down after a long time and the sun shining at the same time that they would sing. Achebe (1958) has such songs that were sung by children, like the following song:

“The rain is falling, the sun is shining,

Alone Nnadi is cooking and eating.” (Achebe, 1958, p. 31)

As the children will be singing and dancing at the same time in the rain, it was an indication that they were happy and welcoming the rain as it was possible that they had not had rain for a long time. The adults do not take part in this kind of singing as they are meant for young children. Rain is regarded as the source of life as it brings water, the land becomes green and animals will have grazing land, and ploughing will resume for people to sow the seeds so as they can have a good harvest and be able to feed their families.

Nkadimeng (p. 11) shows Jabulani’s father, Mazwi, his mother, Hunadi, his cousin and Jabulani singing a dirge to inform *Ngwato*, Jabulani’s grandfather who had died when Jabulani

was 10 years old, that Jabulani, having graduated from the mountain school, was inheriting his name *Ngwato*. A dirge is a mournful song that is usually sung to console people when there is a death in the family. A dirge is not accompanied by dancing as it is not a happy moment. In the example given here, Mazwi's family were singing with their heads bowed to show respect, without dancing, as they were visiting the graveside where *Ngwato* was buried.

Whereas Achebe (1958), Thiong'o (2008) and Nkadimeng (2004) write about the songs, Mphahlele (1959) is silent about singing. Instead he writes about ululation which, in most instances, is an accompaniment for singing. When people start ululating, there is a song that is being sung for that particular occasion which is accompanied by dancing, usually wedding celebrations and initiation graduations when the initiates comes home from initiation schools. Mphahlele (1959) speaks about this when he was paying '*magadi*' for marrying his wife Rebecca. To show that the negotiations were concluded, they started singing and ululating.

Proverbs and Idioms

Proverbs and idioms are a stylised way of speaking in African culture and tradition. The language is hidden in a way that a person does not say what he or she wants to say using everyday language. Maqadzhe and Cloete (2012) presented the functions of proverbs as

giving proper guidance to the young and the old on various issues in life; encouraging, and motivating people when things are not going well for them; and admonishing wrongdoers. (p. 95)

Proverbs, as a form of preserving language, were orally transmitted from generation to generation. Proverbs uphold the accepted values of society, at the same time criticizing mostly unaccepted behaviour. They function as a reference book for a successful life. If children respect the dos and don'ts, they will become successful adults in the future. If, in their childhood, they make friends based on the teachings of the proverbs, they will probably have

a successful life which will earn them a respectable place in the eyes of the community. When doing something that is out of line, but then remembering how the adults at home would react, their conscience will tell them that what they are about to do is not good practice and can make them an outcast in the community. Proverbs are like a coach and a referee of whatever action one may take in society (Selepe, 2007, p. 160).

Nkadimeng's novel (p. 32) shows that Malope and Lolo shared the same view of life by indicating that they were birds of a feather. This saying originates from the proverb "birds of a feather flock together" and shows that once two people share a common view, there is nothing that anyone can do to separate them from what they believe in.

Nkadimeng (p. 11) used another proverb – loosely translated from the Northern Sotho proverb "*a ba tswale ba ate monalepelo ga a tsebje*"²⁷ – encouraging women to give birth to as many children as possible. The proverb encourages women to have many children, because out of the many children, not all of them will turn out to be useless in the eyes of the parents and the community, and then the parents may get praises and be respected because of the deeds of the child.

Achebe (p.123) used a proverb "...and what is good among one people is an abomination with others" derived from the proverb "one man's meat is another man's poison" which means what is good for one man may not be good for another man.

Idioms, like proverbs, are a hidden language and Nkadimeng used idioms in his writing:

- "to kick the blanket" and "*go raga lepai*" – meaning: to die.
- "to give the grave the back of their heads" and "*go fa lebitla sekgoši*" or "*go fura lebitla*" – meaning: to leave.

²⁷ *A ba tswale ba ate mo na le pelo ga a tsebje*:– one should have as many children as possible for the one that will turn out to be good is not known.

- “to step over the head” and “*go namela motho hlogo*” – meaning: to undermine a person. (p 10; 11; 12)

The following passage illustrates Mphahlele’s (p, 19) use of idioms in *Down Second Avenue*:

“I’m not going to mention names,” said the Black woman.

“It’s not true then,” Dokie the sharp one said.

“Look, it’s not my business to be nosing into other people’s dark ways, but – don’t tell anyone about this. I got it from the goat by the roadside, and you did too if someone asks you. But really Dora whispered it in my ear.”

The idiom “to get it from the goat by the roadside” is loosely translated from the Northern Sotho idiom “*go kwa ka pudi ya tsela*”, which is usually used when names are not to be mentioned regarding who came up with what was being said, as there might not be any truth to what has been said. Mphahlele (pp. 30 & 85) made use of other idioms:

- “to go about with eyes open” loosely translated from the following Northern Sotho idiom “*go ntšha mahlo dinameng*” meaning: to be clever
- “to take off” meaning: to leave.

Achebe (pp. 22; 30; 173) also used the following idioms in his writing:

- “to break the heart of a lion” meaning: to defeat
- “to pour down” meaning: to rain heavily
- “to break the silence” meaning: to speak.

Thiong’o (pp. 07; 27) also had a passion for idioms. Some examples of idioms he uses are:

- “to be after one’s life” meaning: to want someone dead
- “to make up your mind” meaning: to agree to do something as requested.

The purpose of idioms and proverbs is to enrich the language so that it becomes enjoyable.

Praise Poetry

Praise poetry falls under the category of traditional poetry. Makgopa (2012, p. 56) classified praise poetry, folksongs and lullabies in the category of traditional poetry as indicated on the schematic presentation of the four categories of folklore in

Figure 1. Praise poetry is poetry in which chiefs or ordinary people introduce themselves to other people when they are happy or angry, so that others can know who they are and where they belong. There are praise poems for chiefs, clan praises, name praises and praise poems for legends. In his definition of praise poetry, Makgopa (2012) included its origin and type, by defining praise poetry as:

The kind of poetry that is orally communicated from one community to another. Its function was primarily to praise the heroes and heroines in the form of traditional leaders. Some community members can be accorded the same status as long as they have achieved something. (p. 56)

Serudu (1990, p. 9) described the significance of praise poetry amongst others as a means of introducing a chief to his people so that they would be able to respect and serve him with pride. The people he oversees should know who he is and his origin. A chief can be praised by a member of the community as a way of showing respect and to scare people from the neighbouring communities in which they are enemies.

A person can also praise himself or herself, or be praised using that person's praise name. Mtumane and Bobelo (2012) described the nature of praise names:

“Praise names are regarded as colourful descriptions of some aspects of the subject of

praise. They are mostly based on the actions or physical appearance of the subject. They may also associate the subject with a natural phenomenon.” (p. 27)

Praise poems. A praise poem is a poem in which an individual can praise himself, or a king or any respectable person in the community of which he is a member. Similar to Mtumane and Bobelo (2012), Mamabolo (2015: 130) gives an example of a praise poem based on the physical appearance and the actions of the subject in the following poem in which a man is praising himself for being loved by women because he does not hesitate when it comes to pampering women:

“Kgomo e a tshwa!”

“E gangwa ke mang?”

“E gangwa ke nna Thepudi mothontshororo,

Thepudi mothomatepetepe motho wa go tsošološa madiba.

Ke motšofe wa go wela kgwahlana

Fela ge e le bjang ke ja bjo botalatala bokamohlaka

Gobane bja go hlabja ke naka bo ka ntsentšha mokgohlwane

Ge o ekwa ba re nna Thepudi ke sejato

Mathaka a bone ge ke a amoga makgarebe,

Ke tloga ke a šupa ka la ka leleduntsobokwana,

Yona thitelwanaboreletšana lerita la makgwathasawane,

Lerita le llege megopo ya bommagomosadi fela.

Le se nnyatšeng mmele go šošobana lena makgarebe

Khudumphato ke fa motšhaotšhele

Go nna wa re o tloga wa be menotosi o itokonya leboelela,

O tloga o etša katse selo maruthorutho.

Ge a nkwer a masogana

A re nna ke ba sepela ka fase bokathete,

E le ge a re mereana ke šomiša ya go utla maebana.

Nna ke bjalo ka kgotlaomone ke phala ba bantši,

Ke tloga ke phala ba bantši ba dilete mankgaleraga.

Ka selotwapotleng le gona ke a fologa

Gobane wena o sa fologego lesogana,

Ka mahlo o tla ja go bona,

Wa šebetša ka go nyama menyamo.”

(Mamabolo, 2015, p. 130)

This poem is literally translated as follows:

“A cattle is spitting!”

“Who is milking it?”

“It is milked by me, Thepudi, the pitch black person,

Thepudi the capricious person, the person who rebuilds the fountains.

I am very old

But as for the grass I eat the very green one like marsh,

Because the one stabbed by the winter star can bring me influenza

When you hear them saying Thepudi is a miser

Comrades have seen me taking their young women

Pointing them with my rounded beard

The small soft grinder of the old man

The grinder that has eaten only dishes from the mother-in-law

Do not despise me of my wrinkled body, you young women,

Sexual satisfaction I give nonstop

When moving away from me you will feel the sweetness
Like a pussycat
When young men mock me
They say I use magic charm to snatch the little doves away
I am like jam, better off than many
Better off than many young men.
Regarding money I am going down
For you young men if you don't go down with money,
You will eat to see with your eyes
Eating with very great sorrow."

In the preceding poem, the poet starts by drawing the attention of his audience by saying "*kgomo e a tshwa*", which means that if the audience is doing something, they must stop whatever they are doing and listen to him. The audience, in turn, would respond by saying "*e gangwa ke mang?*", which shows that they are listening to him as he recites and he must go on and start by introducing himself, who he is and from which clan. This is the introduction of a traditional praise poem. Thepudi, which is the name of this old man, his praise name, is proud of being loved by young girls and sees the women of his age not being his type. He is proud that being an old man, he is loved by young women while their male counterparts are standing by, watching him, because they are hesitant to give these young women money. The young men are saying he is using charm to lure the young women to him.

In the first stanza, the poet describes the physical appearance of the subject of praise by indicating that he is a fickle person who is very old but eats only green grass that is like marsh. If he eats the grass that has been damaged by winter, it can give him influenza. In the third

stanza, the poet comments on the physical appearance of a wrinkled body, which shows that he is an old man but that he is carousing with young women.

The second and the fourth stanzas show the actions of the old man, when he says:

“When you hear them saying Thepudi is a miser

Comrades have seen me taking their young women

Pointing them with my rounded beard

The small soft grinder of the old man

The grinder that has eaten only dishes from the mother-in-law”.

The poet asserts that young men mock him saying he is using love portions on the young women so that they can love him, when in essence the old man is saying that he is sweet like jam, and that is why these young women love him, because he is better than some young men. He declares that he is not afraid to dig deep in his pockets when it comes to pampering these young women, and they love him because he is giving them money to spoil themselves.

Praise name. A praise name is a name given to show respect. Calling people by praise names is common among the Northern Sotho speakers. A male person may be named *Phaahla* or *Hlabirwa*. Other examples of male praise names are: *Phogole*, *Serogole* and *Nape*.

In the same way, women also can be called by their praise names to show respect for them. A woman can be named ‘*Hunadi*’ or ‘*Pebetse*’. If a woman is named ‘*Pebetse*’, she will be greeted or called by that name saying:

‘Pebetse!’

And the woman who is named ‘*Hunadi*’ will be called and addressed as

‘Hunadi!’

Other female praise names are as follows:

Mologadi,
Mahlaku,
and *Napšadi.*

In *Lonely Hearts*, when Jabulani was renamed *Ngwato*, which was the name he inherited from his grandfather after returning from mountain school, people were singing and rejoicing as he has achieved the status of manhood, and the songs that were sung so aroused his feelings that he started reciting a praise poem for the new name he had inherited. *Ngwato* was a praise name and he was supposed to be called by that name. Only, his parents and his fellow initiates could continue calling him Jabulani (Nkadimeng, 2004, p. 10).

Nkadimeng's novel (p. 20) speaks of Mazwi reciting boastfully and beautifully when he is drunk and approaching his home. Recitation comes automatically when people are happy, in the mood for war or wanting to make themselves known. The recitation would introduce one and reveal one's lineage, particularly the paternal lineage. The person will then tell where he or she originated from as a clan and recite the totem after which the clan is named.

In *Lonely Hearts*, Mazwi's two wives were addressed as *Hunadi* and *Pebetse*. The senior wife, who was Jabulani and Malope's mother was named *Hunadi* and the second wife, who was Dikeledi's mother was named *Pebetse*. In Northern Sotho culture these names are used by members of the community in addressing the women as a way of showing respect.

Totem name. A totem name is a name that a clan takes and is usually a name of an animal. The animal could be anything – a lion, an elephant, a porcupine, etc. Not only wild animals are named as totems but household animals can be named as totems as well, such as cow or pig.

People who take an animal as a totem are called by that animal and it is a taboo to kill or eat that animal as they are honouring it as a god. Selepe (2007) confirmed this notion:

The group may be named after its totem and may believe to be descendants from the totem. Usually, the group follows certain rules of conduct with respect to its totem, for example, by neither killing nor eating it. Such respect and honour of an animal that is their totem earns them face. (p. 151)

Bakgaga is a group of people in the Maake area, who are known as *Bakgaga ba gaMaake*. Their totem name is *phuti* (springbok) and they are to be addressed as “*Diphuti*”. A springbok is a small antelope from Southern Africa that can jump high into the air (Hornby, 2010). Culture therefore, prohibits the *Bakgaga ba gaMaake* from eating Springbok meat.

There is also the Batlhabine tribe from the Mogoboya area, known as *Batlhabine ba gaMogoboya* whose totem name is *noko* (porcupine) and they are addressed as “*Dinoko*”. A porcupine is a small animal covered with long stiff needle-like quills which it can raise to protect itself when it is attacked (Hornby: 2010). The *Batlhabine ba gaMogoboya* are also prohibited from killing a porcupine should they come across it. A person from the Bakgaga and Mogoboya clan will feel honoured to be addressed as *phuti* and *noko*, respectively. If they are found seated in a group at the *kgoro* they will be greeted as “*Diphuti* and “*Dinoko* because they will be more than one person, while an individual will be addressed as “*Phuti*” or “*Noko*”.

Not only small wild animals are taken as clan totems but big wild animals are regarded as clan totems as well, such as *tlou* (elephant), *tau* (lion) and *nare* (buffalo) and the person in that clan that takes these animals as their totem name will be addressed as: “*Tlou*”, “*Tau*” or “*Motau*” and

“*Nare*” or

“*Monareng*”, which is the most commonly used for addressing one person.

When there are many people from the same clan they will be addressed as “*Ditlou*”,

“*Dinoko*”, “*Dikolobe*”, “*Ditau*” and “*Dinare*” or alternatively “*Banareng*” which is the most commonly used address among the Northern Sotho speakers of the *Letsoalo* clan.

Of the four selected authors, Nkadimeng (2004) is the only author to entertain the idea of praise poetry. The other three authors, Mphahlele (1959), Achebe (1958) and Thiong’o (2008) are silent about praise poetry. Praise names seem to be exclusive to the South African authors as Nkadimeng (2004) has his characters addressed as *Pebetse* and *Hunadi*, while Achebe’s and Thiong’o’s characters do not have praise names. Although he was a South African with paternal relatives in Maupaneng in the Sekhukhune area, where addressing people by praise names was the order of the day, Mphahlele did not use praise names in his novels, because he was raised in Marabastad under the Western influence. Therefore, his characters had names such as Old Modise and Aunt Dora.

Conclusion

Story telling should be upheld in African culture and tradition as it is seen to be educative in nature. It helps children grow up with good morals, ethics and cultural values. As is seen in the discussion on storytelling, the older people teach the young ones to be responsible adults and to respect their parents.

The songs discussed in this chapter are meant to arouse emotions, as to whether one is in a happy mood or in the mood for war. This, together with the idioms and proverbs, assist in sharpening children’s minds along their journey to responsible adulthood.

Praise poetry, as is indicated in the discussion, introduces the king to his people so that they know who he is and his genealogy. Respectable people in society may also be praised by members of the community, through their totem names, for the good things they are doing in the community in which they are leaders.

Chapter 8: Conclusion and Recommendations

This chapter marks the last chapter of the study in which the summary of the findings is presented, detailing to whether or not the authors were influenced by folklore in their writings. It also gives recommendations for further research in the field of folklore.

Findings

Ong's (1982) notion of secondary orality in which everything has been documented, makes it difficult for Africans to reclaim their status. As has been discussed in this research, it is evident that Africans are influenced by their folklore in their writings. All the selected African writers wrote of similar practices in their own countries that they had learnt about over the course of their upbringing. This calls for Africans in the entire African continent to wake up from their dreams and reclaim their status as Africans. We cannot sit and watch our culture and tradition be swallowed by other cultures, particularly the Western cultures.

The four authors' experiences and writings reveal that practices of Africans from the Southern, Eastern and Western parts of the African continent are inherently similar. The four selected authors from different African countries have demonstrated their passion for the African culture by writing about it in their novels, so that Africans who are literate and readers across the world can read their books and learn about the African culture. In this way they have tried to preserve the African culture and tradition.

The four selected writers were writing from different eras. Their writings represent both the colonial and the post colonial eras. The three writers, Achebe (1958) and Thiong'o (2008) and Mphahlele (1959) in South Africa while Nkadimeng (2004) is writing from the post apartheid era, are both writing from the colonial dispensation when the colonies were under the British rule, yet their writings have similar practices of the African tradition. The study has proved that the authors were influenced in their writing despite using English to communicate their ideas.

Primary orality is deteriorating. Folklore is a thing of the past for uneducated Africans who have not progressed far in terms of schooling. All four authors had, at some stage in their lives, experienced the oppression of one by the other, when missionaries came and took control of their territories. They devised their own way of doing things and regarded African traditions as heathen practices. They established laws that segregated people according to their beliefs. Christians were born amongst the so-called heathens who clung to their cultural practices and were regarded as unholy, as their families were continuing with their traditional customs.

Contribution of the Study

To reclaim the African status, the Department of Basic Education in the South African school system should design curricula in a way that includes folklore as a compulsory genre for all African learners. The present system denies African learners the opportunity to learn about their own cultures and traditions. For example, the system makes provision for schools to choose between a novel and folklore, which then makes it impossible for all the learners to select folklore because some schools will opt for a novel rather than folklore. The absence of folklore in their education means that they will never experience their culture and tradition.

The study may at some point make Africans, specifically South Africans, who regard other fellow nationals as being unholy by practicing their culture and tradition, realise that they are living a lie, a life that is not grounded. Traditional healers yearn to work together with Western doctors to curb some of the illnesses that are considered incurable. If the Department of Health could remove the hurdles that prevent Western doctors and traditional doctors from working together, they may be able to find treatments or cures for some of the illnesses being experienced by their patients. Embracing the practices of traditional doctors will eliminate the stigma of running heathen practices just because they are using traditional medicines.

The study will further be a resourceful document that will assist Learner Teacher Support Material (LTSM) developers to develop material for learners and teachers that are in

line with the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) document. In this way teachers will know what to teach the learners on folklore as the CAPS document prescribes folklore, and not oral literature, as developed in the existing LTSM material, for the FET schools in the South African schools system. This study will assist in clearing up the misinterpretation by different authors who have been developing LTSM for the South African community, and who have been equating oral literature with folklore when oral literature is, in fact, just one element of folklore.

Recommendations

Further research in the field of folklore could be considered, taking cognisance of the intervals during which initiation schools take place in other areas or provinces in South Africa, specifically in Limpopo. This would include looking at the interval and the age at which boys are subjected to severe weather conditions. As indicated in the discussion on initiation, there is typically an interval of three to five years, depending on the cultural practice of each country. If the interval can be recognised, it will provide a chance for *bogwera* to also feature in the cultural practice as the initiation that gives the initiates the status of manhood, and not *bodika* which allows entry to boys at the age of twelve. By the time the twelve year olds reach the age of twenty, and are ready for marriage, they would have forgotten what they had learnt at initiation school, which would render initiation worthless but it would come at a massive cost to parents.

Looking back, Nkadimeng introduced the topic of initiation with Mazwi talking to his son Malope, who was in Grade 10, saying that he should also go to that school where the elder son Jabulani was about to graduate. Grade 10 learners are 16 years old. With the interval of five years until the next initiation, Malope would be 21. If boys could attend initiation schools during that age, it would not put parents under undue financial pressure because then the boys would have made an informed decision and would attend voluntarily. The Department of

Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (CoGTA) should, therefore, intervene in this matter, by setting the age at which boys should be subjected to initiation, so that anyone who allows an underage boy to attend is punished in a court of law.

Current initiation practices contradict the traditional practice of allowing an interval in between initiation periods. CoGTA should step in so that this practice is brought to a halt. This will ensure that boys are mature enough to attend the initiation of their own free will.

Folklore teaches young children how to behave in society. At some Heritage Day celebrations, old people have demonstrated how things were done when they were growing up, and have been scorned by the youth. There have been many changes in the way the children of today are brought up. A child is raised by his or her biological parents only and they are the ones that the child listens to and nobody else. The grandparents' role in helping to bring up children has diminished.

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