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ELEMENTS OF SUPERSTITION IN CT MSIMANG'S ISIZULU NOVEL, *AKUYIWE EMHLAHLWENI*

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ABSTRACT

The investigation of superstitions and superstitious behaviour has not received attention in isiZulu literature. Superstition in isiZulu literature needs serious attention because some isiZulu school networks for school learners present superstition as something dependable. That approach could impede the growing minds of learners from developing critical and rational thinking, consequently, they could fail to solve real-life problems. The behaviouristic theory that underpins this study and fits well with it as it acknowledges that human behaviour, either good or bad is determined by the consequences of previous actions. This research focuses on document analysis that includes the analysis of theoretical treatises and library material, such as books, journals, articles from websites as well as published and unpublished research. Results showed that superstitious beliefs result in witchcraft and the death of innocent individuals.

Keywords: Superstition, superstitious behaviour, witchcraft, culture, traditional healers.

INTRODUCTION

This article examines the use of superstition and superstitious behaviour in CT Msimang's novel, *Akuyiwe Emhlahlweni* (translated as, "Let us consult the diviner"). The focus is on how the author, Msimang, used characters who employ mystical powers to address social problems in polygamous marriage. The story took place during the 20th century in a South African village in the province called Natal. The author chose the milieu of the story when migrant labour was prevalent in South Africa. For instance, Black men left their homes and went to work in big cities like Johannesburg or Pietermaritzburg. The subject of superstitions and superstitious behaviour has not received attention in African languages literature and isiZulu, in particular. Research on superstition needs serious attention because some isiZulu school networks for school learners treat superstition as reality, which could impede and prevent the growing minds of learners to develop critical and rational thinking and they could fail to solve real-life problems. There are scholars, such as, Lipenga (2017); Kajiru and Nyimbi (2020) who discuss superstitions and their impact on African society, particularly on Malawians and Kenyans. There is a paucity of research articles on superstitions focusing on South African society.

Although there are researchers who have researched different social aspects of Msimang's novel *Akuyiwe Emhlahlweni* none has researched superstition or superstitious behaviour. The few scholars that researched his work include, Ntombela (1992) who focused on "Characterisation and time in CT Msimang's Novel '*Akuyiwe Emhlahlweni*'", Ntshangase (2000) who focused on "the influences of traditional medicine in relation to its various uses by

the African societies: a review of Zulu novels”, and Ntombela (2009) who dealt with “African and European narrative conventions in the novels of CT Msimang”. This article answers the question: did the author of *Akuyiwe Emhlahlweni* successfully use the Zulu culture and superstition in crafting his novel? The aim of the article is threefold, namely:

- to identify elements of superstitions in the novel, *Akuyiwe Emhlahlweni*,
- to clarify why some objects and incidents, in the novel under discussion, are regarded as constituting superstitious beliefs among Zulus, and
- to reveal the impact that the identified elements could have on an individual.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The behaviouristic theory underpins this study. It has been found to be relevant to this study since it moves from the premise that the environment determines learning behaviours. The behaviouristic theory has been considered by scholars such as Marques and Benvenuti, (2017) in the study of superstitious behaviour. This theory fits well with this study as it acknowledges that human future behaviour, either good or bad is determined by the consequences of past occurrences. Superstition and superstitious behaviour are learnt. Behaviourists contend that without external stimulation, a person can learn nothing. As such, to learn a superstition, a person should be slowly conditioned through various patterns of reinforcement (Mndawe, 1997: 98). According to this theory, it is believed a person could learn a behaviour through imitation and habit formation. Therefore, most people react to superstitious beliefs after having heard some testimonies and been influenced to develop certain fears and defence mechanisms.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study has adopted a qualitative approach. The qualitative approach is appropriate to this study as it is interested in examining superstitions, human behaviour and how individuals react to what is happening around them. The qualitative approach is interested in meaning (Atieno, 2009; Braun & Clarke, 2013; Creswell, 2009). Mndawe (2019) points out that, “qualitative research is used to reveal meaning that explains the actions and outcomes to different situations”. This study takes cognisance that information about superstition presented might be unfamiliar to some readers as different cultures hold different views about what constitutes superstitious beliefs and what does not. Hence, qualitative research appreciates the fact that the “information and knowledge” is not “produced” from a particular place and the context from which it has been taken is important (Braun & Clarke, 2013: 21). Hence, this research focuses on theoretical treatises and library material such as books, journals, articles from websites as well as published and unpublished research. Relevant information is identified and analysed accordingly. Various subheadings related to superstitions would be discussed in the following paragraphs.

AN OVERVIEW OF ZULU CULTURE AND FAMILY SET UP

The title of the novel, *Akuyiwe Emhlahlweni*, as indicated above means “Let us consult the diviner”. It is necessary to explain the seriousness of consulting a diviner among the Zulus. The diviner is consulted by the community when there is a serious misfortune that could not be explained. According to Zulu tradition, when there is the unexplained death of people or livestock, it is believed that there could be a witch responsible for that misfortune. The diviner would be consulted so he or she would point out the culprit, who is a witch responsible for the misfortunes. The worst sentence for the culprit is death; otherwise, the witch could be expelled from the community. He or she would suffer shame and disgrace. It is a serious offence to

openly accuse an individual or mention his or her name as a suspect. In case, there is someone whom one suspects to be a witch, one dares call him or her a witch because one could be taken to the diviner. Should the allegation be false, one would be liable to a very heavy fine. The diviner act as an arbitrator or a judge who would get the solution to the mystery.

Msimang crafted the novel based on tension among women in a polygamous marriage. Sigodo Thwala married three wives and he expected that there should always be peace in his homestead. MaSibisi is the main wife, known as '*undlunkulu*'. The story resembles the beginning of a folktale as it starts from a situation of lack. The main character, MaSibisi, is without a son as she has given birth to female children only. Seeing that she was not blessed with sons, she became jealous that dowry paid in respect to her daughters, would be enjoyed by the sons of the two wives' sons, namely, MaNzuza and MaMkhize's sons. This is the source of MaSibisi's unhealthy superstitious behaviour that led to witchcraft, the death of an innocent child and her own peril. She could no longer think rationally and suffered a lot of depression and ended up having signs of mental health problems such as bipolar disorder and schizophrenia. Consequently, she lost a considerable amount of weight.

The status of the wives in polygamy was assigned in accordance with who was married first and by following the building structure of the huts. The first wife stays in the big hut (*endlini enkulu*), as such, that wife would be named '*undlunkulu*' (for big hut), as MaSibisi was called. The second wife's hut would be on the left-hand side of the main hut (*esandleni sokhohlo*), as such the wife would be called, '*ikhohlwa*' (left hand). MaNzuza was named *ikhohlwa*, as she was the second wife. MaMkhize, the third wife was '*iqadi*' (support house). The *iqadi*'s hut would be below the hut of the first wife's hut. The third wife was to subject herself to the first wife.

CULTURE AND SUPERSTITION

The term, superstition, in this study is used not with the aim to denigrate beliefs practised in Zulu culture but merely to portray the skills of the author of the novel under discussion in portraying the behaviour of characters and consequently contributing to the development of the plot. There are some superstitions in the novel, *Akuyiwe Emhlahlweni*, that according to Nafi, (2016: 38), which some people may consider "as something normal and part of their belief". Superstition and superstitious behaviour vary from culture to culture. Some cultural practices could be viewed as non-superstitious by those who practice them while outsiders may view them as superstitions. The *South African Concise Oxford Dictionary (2002: 1178)* defines superstition as an "excessively credulous belief in and reverence for the supernatural". The dictionary further states that superstition is "a widely held but irrational belief in supernatural influences, especially as bringing good or bad luck". Jehoda (1969: 3) say superstition refers to, "Unreasoning awe or fear of something unknown, mysterious or imaginary; a tenet, scruple, habit etc. founded on fear or ignorance". In fact, superstition affects the emotions of an individual though unfounded fear of the unknown. Although culture could influence superstition, people in the same culture could be influenced differently. It is expected that individuals in the same culture could engage differently with some superstitions. Farley (2015: 2) confirms that it is unknown how individuals "chose their superstitious behaviour". For instance, although MaSibisi is from the same household as Ntombini (MaSibisi's younger sister), her beliefs are contrary to what her younger sister regards as rational thinking. Individuals could engage with superstitions because they want to feel that they are in control. When there is no way of escaping from a situation, it is easy

to resort to superstition. The danger with such engagement is when the superstition drives a person to think irrationally and to ultimately develop obsessive thoughts and anxiety disorder. Consequently, there are harmless and harmful superstitions. For example, some athletes could believe in luck or doing specific rituals with the hope that they would make them win (Becker, (1975); Damisch, Stoberock, & Mussweiler, (2010); Nachman, (2011) and Domotor, Ruiz-Barquin and Szabo, (2016)). However, for some superstitions could have either a positive or negative impact.

Superstitious behaviour can be learned from the environment. What individuals have experienced can lead to an irrational belief. Something interesting about superstition is that those who say they do not believe in superstitions may however be found to be superstitious in one way or another. Hence, Jahoda (1969: 3) says the term ‘superstition’ has a strongly pejorative flavour; few people care to admit that they are superstitious. Some people unconsciously subscribe to certain superstitious beliefs while others are more self-aware. For that reason, some readers of this article would find what is considered superstitious-belief as nothing peculiar. Hence, Mandal (2018: 66) comments that superstition is “a culturally transmitted behavioural habit, an unconscious biasness which is acquired via non-cognitive repetition”. In short, superstitions could be learned from those who talk as if they benefit from them or they became victims because of superstitious objects and events.

Brokaw, W. H. (1932) and Mndawe (2019) and point out that myths, taboos and superstitions originated from a phenomenon that man had no answer for. They originated from an attempt to make sense of the universe. Superstition originated from man’s effort to explain the inexplicable occurrences of nature and to address the fear related to the unknown spirits that are in a hostile relationship to humanity’s welfare.

THE ZULUS’ VIEW OF SUPERSTITIONS

In isiZulu, there are three words or phrases that are used interchangeably when referring to superstition. Namely, *inkoleloze*, *inkolelo engenancazelo* and *inkolelo engenamqondo*. *Inkoleloze* means, ‘vainness belief’. The word, *inkoleloze* is derived from *ukukholwela ezeni*, meaning ‘to believe in futility’. *Inkolelo engenancazelo* means ‘a belief in ineffectuality’ or ‘belief in mindlessness’ and, *inkolelo engenamqondo* means an ‘irrational and senseless belief’. These phrases indicate that superstition is viewed as a belief that should not be followed as it has unsubstantiated predictive incidences. Most of the incidents are regarded by those who do not believe in superstitions as misguided and lacking scientific proof. In the African context, for instance, Kajiru and Nyimbi (2020) discuss the impact of superstitious beliefs on people with albinism. People living with albinism are killed due to an unsubstantiated belief in superstitions.

One would find it difficult to draw a line between a coincident, that is, pure chance, and incident that is predictive of an incident in a real-life situation. Lamula (1967) an isiZulu writer refers to superstition as *isigameko*, which according to Doke and Vilakazi (1972: 229) refers to an “omen, portent (good or bad)”. Hence, Lamula (1973: 86) says, “*Izigameko yilokhu okuthi uma kwenzeka besekuthiwa umuntu uzakuvelelwa yinto ethile, enhle noma embi*” (an omen refers to something that when it occurs it would be said something good or bad would happen to a person). The cultural and indigenous people made some observations regarding the portents as warning signs that particular events are likely to happen. What is interesting in some of the

portents is that they possess double or contradictory meanings. The same superstition may be interpreted differently by different people or different cultures as well as by members of the same family. The example is found in Msimang's novel where MaSibisi and Ntombini her younger sibling hold different interpretations about events. The differences in interpretation in the same culture are explained by Lamula (1967). For instance, sneezing (*ukuthimula*). When *ukuthimula* occurs once up to three times it means one is healthy, but if it occurs more than three times it is a sign that one is contracting influenza or a terrible disease. On the other hand, when a diviner sneezes it is an assurance that the divination spirits are present. In the explanations of the meaning of portents the use of the word, 'kungahle' (it might) is unfamiliar. That should be the evidence that not everything about the portents is certain. That should be the reason why when some portents occur, it should not be the reason for one to fear.

One of the examples Lamula (1967) gives is about the interpretation of the appearance of the sky and weather conditions that would lead to rainfall. He cites, for example, *ukubheja*, which is used to refer to the red sky. Lamula (1967: 92) says, *Kuthi uma lishona libomvu, bathi lizakusa uma phela kade linomvimbi* (when the sky is red at sunset, it is said that there will be a clear sky if it was raining. He supports this by referring to the *New Testament, Bible*, in Matthew 16: 2, KJV: "He answered and said unto them, when it is evening, ye say, it will be fair weather: for the sky is red" to indicate that this prediction has been used from ancient times, as it is also used by Zulus.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

MaSibisi's beliefs and behavioural pattern

As indicated above, MaSibisi, the main character of the novel, *Akuyiwe Emhlahlweni*, is the chief wife of Sigodo Thwala. She is distressed because as the principal wife she birthed girls only and she is without a son who would be a successor to his father, Sigodlo. She expresses her frustration and develops a negative attitude toward her fellow wives in polygamy as she superstitiously believes that the two wives are bewitching her. She says MaNzuzza bewitched her and she is responsible for preventing her from giving birth to boy children.

As a principal wife, she ought to conduct herself with dignity that is in keeping with the behaviour of the dignified Zulu queen, just as her position in the polygamous marriage demands such respectful conduct. The dignity of the chief wife should be marked by respect for her position and respect of the fellow wives and husband. The principal wife should support decisions taken by her husband. She should be exemplary in all matters pertaining to the management of the household. On the contrary, MaSibisi conducts herself in an undignified manner to the amazement of her close relatives.

Msimang (1973), in his novel, makes mention of four traditional healers, namely, Nxumalo, Ngcobo, Zangaza and Simbo. Each of these diviners plays a role in confirming or disputing MaSibisi's superstitious beliefs. Nxumalo has been appointed to be a family traditional physician for the Thwala's family. Although Nxumalo does not practise divination, he has in-depth knowledge of using herbs for healing all kinds of ailments. However, MaSibisi suspects that Nxumalo could be involved in making her fail to bear boy children. She accuses Nxumalo of collaborating with MaNzuzza.

Ngcobo is a well-known diviner. However, he conspires with MaSibisi that when the community comes to him for divination and consultation about the death and sickness of Thwala's children, Ngcobo would not disclose that the cause of all those deaths and sicknesses is MaSibisi. Therefore, Ngcobo is not a credible diviner. Instead of rebuking MaSibisi, he allows her to manipulate him and he was prepared to tell a lie during the divination consultation. Fortunately, no divination consultation took place at Ngcobo's place.

Zangaza, although he called himself a diviner, he is a wizard. He played a major role in advancing MaSibisi's superstitious beliefs. He explains that he does not practise divination. He says when one wants to enquire about what troubles them one has to state one's case then he would ask the ancestors to reveal to him how he should go about solving the problems. However, his actions suggest that he is just playing tricks. During his discussion with MaSibisi, he says the ancestors say she should start by killing the sons of her fellow wives. This statement contradicts what he previously said about not practice divination.

Simbo is a powerful diviner and he is training others on how to get knowledge of hidden secrets. He is the one who convicted and exposed MaSibisi and Zangaza of the death of Thwala's daughter and causing the MaNzuza and MaMkhize's sons to become paralysed and lost the ability to speak due to Zangaza's poisons.

Example of superstitious beliefs

Msimang (1973) employed the use of superstition techniques to give life to his novel and to convince the reader so the events might appear real. As indicated above MaSibisi birthed female children only and she did not enjoy the money for bride price for her daughter instead it was enjoyed by the rivalry wives' sons. In order to solve the problem about who is going to get the inheritance, she thought it would be better if all the other wives were killed. Her friend advised her to consult a wizard called Zangaza. Zangaza was in fact a wizard masquerading as a diviner. This is confirmed later by MaSibisi that, "*Empeleni akasiyo inyanga uZangaza, unghokhovula womthakathi*" (Msimang, 1973: 89) (Actually, Zangaza is not a diviner, he is an old, experienced wizard). The wizard spelt out to her that if she would like to get his herbs, she should be prepared to send a cow and a goat as payment. She was caught between a rock and a hard place. What frustrated her the most was that she did not have money and secondly, she had no permission from her husband to consult another traditional healer while there was a family native doctor (*inyanga*). Coincidentally, after her parents died, they left behind a few cows and goats. The livestock was kept by her cousin, Makati. Therefore, she thought, the best plan was to go to her cousin and request him to release some of the cows and goats so she could take them to Zangaza, the wizard, as payment. Off she went to Makati.

Msimang (1973) skillfully presented a superstitious belief at the arrival of MaSibisi at Makati's place. Makati's says, "*Usucishe awangifika. Kade ngilokhu ngithi ngiyaphuma kungaphumeki, ngiyabona bengivilaphiswa uwe.*" (You nearly missed me. I have been delaying going out, I can see that you caused me to be sluggish). Makati expresses his superstitious belief that MaSibisi affected his actions. He alleges that she is the one who caused him to delay going out. According to superstition, if one feels lazy without any cause, it could mean that a lazy person is on his or her way to your house. Hence, Makati was delayed from going out to cut some sticks because of MaSibisi. In villages where there are no means of communication, it is not possible to make appointments or to inform relatives or any other person that you are coming

to visit them. Therefore, when one feels tired and lazy or sluggish, one's guest would be characterised by laziness or sluggishness. Hence that suggests that it is believed that another person can affect one's actions as MaSibisi affected Makati's movement. On the other hand, MaSibisi is counting herself lucky to find Makati because she did not make an appointment. The use of superstitious beliefs gives life to the story as it makes what happens believable. The reader who is familiar with such beliefs becomes convinced that such incidents could take place and could reflect the culture and the people's way of life. The use of such superstitious beliefs fits well with the milieu of the novel. The lifestyle of people in the novel indicates that they have little education. The community is not well developed and the observance of culture reigns supreme.

MaSibisi was selective in following the Zulu culture. For instance, she did not follow the cultural procedure when she took the goats and cows to Makati so that he can look after them on her behalf. She did not divulge to her husband that she had some livestock that has been farmed out to Makati. The practice of farming out livestock, known as *ukusisa*, refers to the placing of livestock in another person's kraal for them to look after. Msimang used this tradition to create an opportunity for MaSibisi to secretly get the calf and young goat as payment to Zangaza the wizard in exchange for the poisonous medicinal herbs. Her hopes were dashed when Makati refused to release the livestock due to his respect for the Zulu tradition that prevents him from doing so. According to isiZulu culture, a married woman does not own livestock. All livestock belong to her husband. The husband is the only one who can consent to sell or slaughter a goat or cow. That is why Makati refuses to release the livestock because should he be discovered, a heavy fine could be imposed on him. Instead of following the culture or challenging the unfairness of the cultural practice, MaSibisi chose to follow her superstitious belief that she has stigma (*isigcwagcwa*) that makes her abominable and disagreeable or distasteful to everybody. According to Doke and Vilakazi (1972: 238), *isigcwagcwa* is an isiZulu term that refers to the condition of "unpopularity or disagreeableness". *isigcwagcwa* is believed to be a condition in life where an individual experiences repercussions of unknown spells or curses due to a spell being cast on to them. Usually, the source of *isigcwagcwa* is unknown. However, one can remove it through spiritual healing. However, although MaSibisi says she is loathed by everybody and she is distasted she does not seek help for the stigma cleansing instead she wants poison to kill her fellow wives in polygamy. Msimang used this type of thinking to advance conflict in the novel.

MaSibisi's daughter, Ncengani, tried to advise her mother against her superstitious beliefs and that she should not be suspicious of others thinking that they caused her womb to bear females only because this affects her health. Ncengani reminds her that MaSibisi's mother also birthed two daughters only. There was no boy-child from her family. Therefore, MaSibisi resembled her mother who did not have a son. MaSibisi refuses to take her daughter's advice. She is adamant that everybody is against her. Ncengani advises her mother to consult a traditional doctor to convert her uterus (*amphendule inzalo*) so that she could bear a male child. This superstitious belief holds that a traditional doctor has the ability to heal a uterus and convert it so a woman who gives birth to females only, can give birth to sons. According to MaSibisi, Xulu, the healer, instead of converting her uterus, he connived with MaNzuzu to close her uterus so she should not bear sons. This superstitious belief causes more complication in the story. MaSibisi, instead of consulting the traditional doctor who would convert her uterus, chose to consult a wizard called Zangaza. Superstition, for characters such as MaSibisi

developed “a false sense having control over outer conditions” (Mandal 2018: 67), and instead of reducing anxieties, she worsened her own situation and this led to stress and anxiety.

The Msimang describes Zangaza as having a scary appearance. In fact, the scary appearance is superstitiously associated with the strength of his herbs. The more terrifying his looks, the stronger the herbs. In addition to his appearance, the author mentions that his voice is hoarse as if he was trained by a water python (*imfundama*) (Msimang, 1973: 41). It is believed that some traditional healers could undertake their training under the water and the water python would train them. The python could be fetched by the trainee diviner (Msibi 2002). There is a belief that diviners who were trained underwater have more magical powers and their *muthi* (medicines) are very effective in whatever purpose they are used for than those who were trained outside water. The author mentions that to create an expectation that the *muthi* that Zangaza uses should be very effective. Indeed, when MaSibisi met Zangaza she was convinced that she would get a very powerful and effective poison. However, there is no scientific proof that a person who is tall and dark in colour, has magical powers and is able to supply effective medicinal herbs. Although there is no scientific proof, the author makes it believable as it is a superstition.

Furthermore, there is a superstitious belief that a sorcerer who keeps unfamiliar items, such as, the skins of wild animals, bones and skulls and the skins of dead snakes in his consultation room possesses strange magical powers. That is why Msimang (1973: 42) gives a full description of how Zangaza was dressed in items like seashells and baboon’s skin. He also describes the consulting room which has a lot of items including the skin of python, mamba, cobra, rock rabbit, hyenas and skulls and bones of various antelopes. The dress code itself caused MaSibisi to be convinced that she had come to the right person who would assist her in solving the problem of the rival wives by eliminating them.

In order to convince MaSibisi that she should trust that the medicinal herbs are effective, Zangaza says his medicinal herbs are from around Mozambique and Zimbabwe. It is believed that those counties have very powerful diviners because of the medicinal herbs that are not found in South Africa. She expresses her feelings by saying, *Hawu! Kanti abakithi bangithanda kangaka? Ngaze ngayithola inyanga okukade kwasa ngiyifuna nkosi yami.* (Oh, my ancestors love me so much? At long last I have found the diviner I have been looking for, for such a long time). In his divination, Zangaza tells MaSibisi that she will ultimately bear a son. However, she should first eliminate the sons of the other wives as they could cause trouble for MaSibisi’s son who was to be born.

Zangaza gave MaSibisi a packet of poisonous herbs that should be mixed with sour milk’s whey. MaSibisi receives the herbs and does not say thank you but says, *Awubongwa* (one should not say thank you for the medicine), which means one is not supposed to say thank you when one receives medicine because it is superstitiously believed that should one say “thank you” the medicine would not be effective and it will fail to do what is meant to do. This is another superstitious belief that is common among African people.

To discourage the unreliability of the superstitious beliefs, the author gives the consequences of MaSibisi’s actions. MaSibisi mixed the poisonous herbs from Zangaza with the intention of killing MaMkhize’s son, Mzikayifani. Unfortunately, the poison was mistakenly drunk by

MaSibisi's favourite daughter, Ncengani, when MaSibisi was away working in the fields. On her way back home, she suddenly felt weak and she could not walk properly because of nervousness. The feeling she had was a sign predicting that something bad might have happened at home. She was suspicious thinking that something might have gone wrong with her plan of poisoning Mzikayifani. Msimang used a foreshadowing device to create tension about the events that are hidden from the protagonist. MaSibisi's suspicion is followed by her seeing two yellow-billed kites fighting. The fighting of the birds could be superstitiously foretelling conflicts that might arise. The situation became worse when MaSibisi heard an owl hooting from a nearby bush. An owl (*isikhova*) is the type of bird that is not liked by Zulus. It is also believed to be a bird owned by witches. Hence Nzuzza, (2009: 46) says, *isikhova sithathwa njengenyoni yamashwa ekukhaleni kwaso emini*. (An owl is regarded as a bird that foretells bad luck especially when it hoots during the day). She furthermore says,

Isikhova siyinyoni ngokwenkolelo yabantu engathandeki. Sithathwa njengenyoni yabathakathi. Ngenxa yokuphila kwaso nesinye ziphendulana ebusuku, kudala ukuba zibukwe ngeso lokuthi ziza nokuthile kubantu. Leyo nkoloze ize iholele abantu ukuba uma sike sazwakala sikhala, kumele abakulowo muzi benze yonke imizamo yokuthi singaphinde sikhale. Bangahamba bayofuna inyanga ezosusa isikhova emzini wabo.

(Nzuzza: 2009: 46).

(An owl is a bird that is detestable according to people's belief. It is regarded as a bird for witches. It is because of its way of living when they reply to each other, as they hoot at night; that causes suspicion that they bring along something to people. That superstition resulted in people in that household where it was heard hooting make some means that it should not hoot anymore. They may go out and look for a diviner that would remove the owl from their home).

The reader who is acquainted with the Zulu culture and with its superstitions would quickly predict that MaSibisi would have a nasty experience at home. Although at the time MaSibisi did not comment about the birds, there was an event that was unknown to her. Indeed, when she comes home, she, to her surprise, finds that her favourite daughter, Ncengani has died due to the poison she mistakenly drank that was meant to be given to MaMkhize's son, Mzikayifani. The prediction though it was not direct, came true.

Intuitions and predictions

Prediction is regarded as superstition. When MaNzuzza advised her husband, Sigodo to resign from his work and be around his homestead because things are not going well. Sigodo indicated that he would go away and he would resign from his work after four months. MaNzuzza expresses her feeling that she could feel in her blood that something bad would happen before the end of four months. She had a premonition of imminent disaster. In Msimang (1973: 76), she says, "*Izinyanga ezine lezi ezishiwo uyise kaSipho ngeke ziphele neze kungakenzeki okukhulu.*" (These four months that Sipho's father talks about would never end before something terrible happens). MaNzuzza's predictions came true. The two sons of MaNzuzza and MaMkhize were paralysed due to *umbhulelo* (*umbhulelo* "refers to a method of sorcery where the intended victim engages in an action of crossing over" (Nene, 2014: 11), that MaSibisi used to bewitch the sons. When someone predicts something and it comes to pass, that person becomes trustworthy and is regarded as a person of integrity. When a person makes predictions and these predictions do not materialise, the person becomes untrustworthy. Zangaza, the diviner, is untrustworthy due to his false predictions. There are predictions he made that did

not come true. For instance, Zangaza said he gave MaSibisi some medicine that would quell down the wrath of Sigodo so he would listen to all her advice only and to the contrary there was a quarrel between her and Sigodo. Zangaza also said he would heal MaSibisi and she would ultimately give birth to a son and that did not take place, instead, MaSibisi died by drowning in the river. He predicted that his herbs would confuse the diviner they would consult but that could not come true.

The use of objects and places in superstition

Superstition gives rise to the notion that some objects or animals are endowed with special power or cursed and can be used by witches. When Makati refused to release MaSibisi's livestock, she threatened him. The author created tension and fear. MaSibisi warned Makati saying,

“uma ngizishiya sezolandwa abanye. Mhlawumbe zolandwa umphezulu uzithathe kanye nawe, mhlawumbe zilandwe unoha imfene yehlathi. Uma kungenjalo zilandwe imikhovu, abafana boqunga noma okunye okunjalo.”

(If I leave them (the livestock) behind they will be fetched by others. Perhaps the lightning would fetch them along with you, perhaps they will be fetched by a forest baboon. If not so, they will be fetched by exhumed corpses of a dead people, dwarfs or anything like that).

Makati had no alternative but to release the livestock due to fear of witchcraft. His behaviour and action were affected by his belief in witchcraft. It is believed that witches could create lightning even when there are no clouds. The witches could send lightning to fetch items and transfer them. A baboon is one of the wild animals that is used the most by the witches. Lamula (1967: 68) explains how witches (*abathakathi*) ride on baboons facing backwards. This is unbelievable since the mass of an adult baboon found in South Africa is about 37kg while the average mass of an adult human above 61kg. In fact, the human's mass will be too heavy for the baboon to carry. Secondly, when Makati heard of '*imikhovu*' (*umkhovu* is a dead person brought back to life but he is unable to speak) he was very nervous. Thirdly, he was afraid when MaSibisi talked about '*abafana boqunga*' (dwarfs or zombies), which are also known as '*omantindane*' or '*otikoloshe*' (Ntuli 2011: 83). The mention of "*abafana boqunga*" causes fear. Hence, the author successfully directed the events by using superstitious objects. Zangaza gave MaSibisi some fats called, "*isiwungawunga*". The term "*isiwungawunga*" is derived from the verb stem "*-wunga*" which means to entice or mislead. Zangaza and MaSibisi had to perform a ritual to mislead the witch doctors still in apprenticeship (*amathwasa*). They used the *isiwungawunga* and indeed the *amathwasa* were confused but Simbo, the great diviner could not be confused by the use of the fats from Zangaza. The choice of shrubs such as *ihlule lemamba* (mamba spell, the scientific term is, *Secamone Gerrardi*) has been used by the author in order to portray the strength of the medicine. This type of medicine is used by those who perform magic spells.

Sigodo Thwala is puzzled by the death of his daughter, Ncengani due to the poisoning. He suspects that the death of his daughter is due to the wrath of the ancestors. He also suspects that this might be a stronghold that should be removed by a ritual of pleading with the ancestors (Msimang, 1973: 55). There is a common belief that when something mysterious takes place, the ancestors could be expressing their anger against the individual or the household. The author of the novel aptly chose those superstitious beliefs to show the reader how certain people

who belong to other cultures solve their problems. Furthermore, when Xulu's horse was not galloping at the speed he desired, he complained and cited that the reason could be *ithonya lokufa* (the influence of death). He suspected that the spirit of death could be causing the horse to have a slow pace of running. This means that when death comes it would have the power to slow one down until it prevails. When Xulu discovers that he forgot to take along the most important medicine that could heal the dying boy he repeats the same utterance, "Ngabe *ithonya lokufa njalo lonke lelo*?" Msimang, (1973: 101), (Could all these be the result of the influence of death?). This is a strong superstitious belief that when things go wrong it is as a result of a certain influence such as the influence of death. This type of thinking does not encourage people to take responsibility and plan their life. They think their success is decided by an unknown fate. This is also supported by the incident when MaSibisi was going to hang herself and suddenly she meets Zangaza in the bush next to the river. That luck results in saving MaSibisi's life so she would join others when they go to consult a diviner. Msimang has indirectly discouraged polygamous marriages due to problems encountered by the members of the families. Secondly, the author has successfully shown that the use of 'umuthi' (medicines) to solve social problem results in witchcraft and the death of innocent people.

CONCLUSION

This article examined the skills that Msimang employed in crafting his novel. The purpose was to identify elements of superstitions in the novel, *Akuyiwe Emhlahlweni*, and clarify why some objects and incidents are regarded as constituting superstitious beliefs and to reveal the impact the identified elements could have on society. One would attest that Msimang's (1986) work as highlighted in his work, *Folktale Influence on A Zulu Novel*, has characteristics of a folktale due to the superstitious objects and events he used in the novel. The discussion has given various examples of elements of superstition and showed how the main character, MaSibisi, believed in superstitions that led her to practice witchcraft and in turn resulted in the demise of her favourite daughter. The act and belief in superstitions brought instability in the polygamous marriage. Although superstitious belief results in a positive attitude for other people, it has been found that it results in a lot of anxiety and stress as it was mentioned in the book that MaSibisi became so lean due to suspicious beliefs against her fellow wives. She was actually behaving like a person suffering from schizophrenia. The novel serves as an example that rational thinking should be encouraged rather than relying on superstitious beliefs that are not based on scientific evidence. The author was able to craft a unique story with characters that resemble people found in real-life situation.

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