

Imparting Unhu/Ubuntu and Spirituality through Shona Novels: A Case for Masvingo Urban Schools

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Abstract: - This paper examined the various spiritual values of unhu reflected in Patrick Chakaipa and Charles Mungoshi's novels *Pfumo Reropa* and *Kunyarara Hakusi Kutaura?* respectively. It mainly focused on the extent to which Shona literature, novels, in particular, can be used to promote in learners the religious beliefs and practices which have succumbed to acculturation. This qualitative study employed textual analysis by researchers and teachers and interviews with teachers. Afrocentricity and unhu conceptualisation informed the study. It was established that the two novels which fall into the old and new world respectively, contain important lessons with regard to cultural values that characterise the Shona religious life. Virtues established include respect for spirits and God, deep respect for religious beliefs and practices, participation in religious practices and application of moral lessons learnt from those practices. Findings indicated that not only novels on pre-colonial life experiences portray the traditional religious values but those set in the neo-colonial are also custodians of the community ideals. The study, therefore, concluded Shona novels can be used in the promotion of unhu spiritual values among Shona learners. It, however, recommends careful selection of novels into the syllabus so that the religious aspect of life is fully taken care of.

Keywords: Unhu/Ubuntu, spirituality, cultural values, derogatory terms, moral lessons, old/new world novels

I. INTRODUCTION

The African traditional religious landscape is one cultural area that suffered heavily by the introduction of foreign Christian beliefs and doctrines. Africans have been lured into believing that their indigenous religion is heathen(evil). In fact, early researchers of African Traditional Religion (ATR) described that religion using derogatory terms such as fetish, barbaric, animism, ancestor worship and several others. The net effect of such descriptors was such that the African people were hoodwinked to think that their religion is not worthy to believe, hence, pursuing the foreign belief systems, culture and practices became the norm. The Shona, just like other Africans tend to forget that their traditional values characterise and define them as people. In traditional Shona societies, daily practices were guided by indigenous religious beliefs. Because they cherished the same religious values, the Shona people lived as a family bound by their religious beliefs and practices. These religious beliefs and practices enabled them to live peacefully and harmoniously. As core values of the Shona society, these were passed from generation to generation through the traditional education system which

focused on the production of graduates with *unhu*. With *unhu* people exudes such behaviours as kindness, friendliness, humility, respectful and altruistic (Hapanyengwi-Chemhuru et al, 2016:100). Adults used oral literature as the main subject in imparting such content which was central in their day to day living. This paper focuses on the teaching of the same spiritual values through literature, the novel in particular, which is taught in the formal school. The novels *Pfumo Reropa* and *Kunyarara Hakusi Kutaura?* will be used to prove that the Shona written literature has religious values worthy teaching in schools and these values can be successfully taught through fiction. As will be demonstrated below, the religious *unhu* values,

percolate and influence the people in their everyday life and activities, and in their various sectors of life, social, economic as well as political. Without this religion, African people are undefinable because it is their religion which shapes the people's world outlook and therefore which gives meaning to their philosophy of life (Makaudze, 1998: 59).

This implies that religious principles are part and parcel of the whole fabric of the African people's daily life. Therefore, to the African people, there is a hair-thin line between the sacred and the profane. Each and every sphere of their lives is defined through religion. Makaudze's assertion also implies that religious beliefs shape the *unhu/ubuntu* philosophy, the Africans' view of life or as Hapanyengwi-Chemhuru et al, 2016:106, citing Louw (2001:1) writes, "... the spiritual foundation of African societies".

Pfumo Reropa

In *Pfumo Reropa* (1961), Chakaipa presents Chief Ndyire, a greedy and covetous man, who takes his subjects' beautiful wives by force. His greediness precipitates murders and counter-murders in the story. In the beginning, Ndyire covets Munhamo, Shizha's wife, and destroys the whole Nhindiri village, except for women and Tanganeropa who is spared because of his mother who threatens to take her life if Ndyire's army kills her son. The Nhindiri women are shared among Ndyire and his counsellors. Tanganeropa, the surviving son, grows under the custody of Chief Ndyire as his mother is given to Ndyire. Munhamo finds favour in the eyes of Ndyire's senior wife (*vahosi*) who teaches her the secrets

behind a good wife. Because of the advice, Munhamo becomes Ndyire's favourite wife after the death of *vahosi*. Later, because of Handidiwe, Ndyire's co-wife's jealousy for Munhamo, Ndyire dies after consuming a poisoned egg which was meant to kill Munhamo. At the death of Ndyire, Munhamo is inherited by Ndyire's nephew whose wife does not like her. This is where Tanganeropa discovers his identity from Haripotse who narrates the ordeal. He is disturbed but is counselled by Haripotse who promises to forge him a spear.

Haripotse takes Tanganeropa to a thick forest where Tanganeropa has to pass through pain and suffering in order to get the shaft for the spear from Chendamba anthill which has a dense thorny vegetation cover. After the training on how to use the spear, Haripotse renames him Tanganeropa because of the amazing skill displayed by the lad in the forest. Tanganeropa is instructed that his name meant that whenever hunting or fighting, he should shed blood first. The two return home where Tanganeropa marries Munjai, Haripotse's granddaughter. Tanganeropa embarks on a journey to the Portuguese to look for beads which were part of the lobola. The other men in his company are killed by wild animals and by Chief Godobo's people. Tanganeropa and their goods are captured but he is rescued by the chief's beautiful daughter whom he later brings back home as his second wife. He finds his mother and her children dead except for Rwiriko, his younger brother. When he finds out that the new Chief wants to take his senior wife, Munjai, Tanga and his sympathisers fight the chief who is killed and Tanganeropa takes back the chieftainship. When he is old, Tanganeropa shares power with his half-brother, Rwiriko, who later turns against his brother and kills him together with his wives and father-in-law, Godobo. He (Rwiriko) is, however, killed by Tanga's young son. It is understood that nobody inherits Tanganeropa's spear and it becomes a legendary spear (Kahari, 1990).

Kunyarara Hakusi Kutaura?

Mungoshi's *Kunyarara Hakusi Kutaura?* (1983) is about the demise of Shona culture and the African being caused by the vehicles of westernisation, namely; the church, western education and the urban environment. Mungoshi introduces the story with the song, *Zuva ravira tinovatepi?* From a literal interpretation, the setting sun in the song may symbolise the end of a dispensation. Here, that the chorister laments that the sun has set, linked with the cultural discourse, reflects the dearth or destruction of the African cultural essence.

The rhetorical device at the end of the first line reflects chagrin, bewilderment, perplexity and, above all, the torment of great nature. This torment comes from the realisation that the sun has set when there is no shelter. What comes to one's imagination is an alien traveller who sojourns, only to be caught up in the maze of the dark night, shelter-less. Darkness, in the literal circles, is associated with menace, hence the vulnerability of the stranger. By implication, the song portrays the Shona's acculturation journey into a dark and sinister world, unknown, alien and thus, very terrifying.

Accordingly, the song portends the doom and gloom before the Shona as an outcome of the western cultural intrusion and influence.

The second two verses from last allude to communication breakdown – intercultural communication breakdown as a result of the language barrier. This is indicative of the myriad socio-linguistic challenges induced by the intrusion of western culture, metaphorically, language, here, can be taken to represent one's cosmology, philosophy of life and, above all, paradigm. Accordingly, where there is no understanding in these dialectics, the end result is confusion.

Furthermore, the song alludes to the loss of direction here, hence the charade upon the imbibing of western values. Thus, the repetition of the diction „*tadhakwa*“, three times, implies being „drunk“, reflects the essence of confusion which has been brought about by western cultural values.

In the story, the author decries the negative influences of acculturation among the Shona because of contact with Western culture using the Chimbimu family. He presents individualism first, through the use of characters as titles, secondly, through Eric who after attaining education from abroad alienates himself from his family and thirdly, through Mazarura who no longer associates himself with traditional expectations because he is a Christian. Eric chooses to stay at Paul's place where there is „enough space“ and falls in love with Paul's wife, Lorna, despite having engaged with Martha. Their relationship is despised by family members and eventually ends in tragedy. Lorna commits suicide and Eric is arrested over the death. The author, through his mouthpiece, VaNhanganga, ponders deeply about the division in the family with no communication at all between Mazarura, the elder son, and Eric, who are at the centre. In his novel, Mungoshi exposes Christianity, Western education and the urban setting as the major causes of cultural erosion among the Shona society.

II. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The study utilises Afrocentricity as a literary theory in discussing the promotion of *unhu* traditional religious values through Shona literature as it was formulated from the study of African literature basing on the African cultural assumptions, expectations and functions (Furusa, 2002). The theory „... insists upon our own historical, political, social and cultural matrix to interpret and translate our lives in order that our rich African legacy may be handed down for future generations“ and offers insights into the „significance of self-naming, and by extension self-definition, through literary works for the integrity and survival of African people“ (Hudson-Weems, 2004: xx; 19; Ndlovu and Ngwenya, 2010). Such a theory best suits this study that assesses the extent to which Shona literature is promoting the African legacy. Literature must be seen promoting *unhu* which is paramount to the African culture. The current research is heavily guided by this theory in examining the portrayal of *unhu* principles in novels and evaluate whether or not literature under study

promotes *unhu*. Judgement on the contribution of different authors' works of art towards the promotion of *unhu* is guided by the standard of good literature provided by the theory.

Unhu is a cultural concept which encompasses the social, political, economic and religious values of the Shona people. The exposition of the concept through Afrocentricity clarifies the most cherished values of the Shona culture under scrutiny in this study and provides adequate knowledge of different African cultural aspects under study, hence, making it clear why the African theory of literature becomes the informing theory to this study. The discussion of the different virtues of religious *unhu* as postulated by the theory helps in evaluating whether these are portrayed positively or negatively, hence, assisting in judging the contribution of the different texts towards the promotion of *unhu* in Zimbabwean secondary schools.

III. METHODOLOGY

The study used a qualitative approach. Textual analysis and interviews were used as data gathering methods. The textual analysis was done by both the researchers and Shona teachers from Masvingo urban secondary schools. Five secondary schools were randomly selected to form the sample. The study involved five teachers, one from each school. Teachers were selected because they are key players in the teaching of literature.

IV. FINDINGS

Data gathered indicated that the area of spirituality may be difficult to teach to learners with various religious backgrounds. Male Teacher A commented:

We happen to have three religions into which our Shona learners fall. These are African Traditional Religion, Christianity and Islam. You need to be wise in teaching Christians and Muslims traditional spirituality. Some may not accept it.

Female Teacher C also had this to say:

Yaa it's tricky because Christians and Muslims do not tolerate African spiritual beliefs. Otherwise *tinogona kungodzidzisira bvunzo kwete kuti vagozvarama*. [Yes, it's tricky because Christians and Muslims do not tolerate African spiritual beliefs. Otherwise, we can only teach them for the exam and not expect that they practice that].

These contributions, therefore, imply that the Shona teacher needs to acknowledge and respect all religions but noting that *unhu* is expected in all.

Unhu and religious beliefs and practices

The Shona people had their religion which was characterised by beliefs and practices. Africans believe that these beliefs and practices depict the "bond between humans, ancestors and

the Supreme Being" and inculcate societal values in members of the community (Nafukho, 2006: 409). In the religious sphere of life,

Ubuntu, therefore, implies a deep respect and regard for religious beliefs and practices that were supposed to guide all human life endeavours, including learning and working (ibid: 409).

This means that for humans to be regarded as having *unhu*, should respect and observe the different beliefs and practices in honour of the ancestors and the Supreme Being.

A person with *unhu* should adhere to the belief that the dead continue to exist among the living so that they link the living to the creator. Thus, whenever humans are in distress or need, they should approach their ancestors who intercede on their behalf with God (Ulvestad, 2012). The selected novels portray the African people's spiritual way of living. In Mungoshi's *Kunyarara Hakusi Kutaura?*, Paul and his siblings are regarded as characters with *unhu* because they constantly seek God's intervention through their family ancestral spirits. VaNhanga believes that Paul and his siblings succeed in life because they regularly hold ritual ceremonies either appealing for intervention or in honour or for guidance. On the other hand, she is convinced that Mazarura, her eldest son, has lost *unhu*. Instead of seeking guidance from the ancestral spirit on behalf of the family, he has become a Christian fanatic. According to VaNhanga, his actions have betrayed the whole family into misfortunes; her family is no longer under their supernatural care and protection. In support of this belief, all the family members seem to be against Mazarura's passiveness. As the father figure in the family, they expect him to be exemplary. Thus, the novel presents a lesson to the readers that ancestors have influence in the lives of the living hence, individuals should seek the ancestral spirits' guidance in order to prosper.

Sibanda (2014: 27) is of the opinion that "above all the person must respect the spirits and God" as they have the power to guard the lives of the living. This Shona belief in the dead is portrayed in Chakaipa's *Pfumo Reropa*. The Shona society respects the dead for their duties in the lives of the living. They believe that if the ancestral spirits are not respected, they fail to deliver and things go wrong. This is stressed in the Shona proverb *Mudzimu ishiri, kutukwa unobhururuka* [an ancestral spirit is like a bird; he flies away when abused]. This emphasised the belief that when ancestral spirits are offended, they abandon the living for good. For instance, when Tanganeropa is about to discover that Ndyire isn't his father; her mother sees danger and attributes this to the dead saying:

Midzimu yokwangu yagoti ndadii?...Iye Musikavanhu agoti ndaita sei? [What wrong have my ancestors seen in me? Even God, what wrong did I do?]

VaMunhamo believes her ancestral spirits have short-changed her by allowing the information to leak into Tanganeropa's ears. She starts to search for her life to see whether she has not angered them. Thus, this implies that anything good no matter how small is regarded as coming from the dead. No wonder why whenever Ndyire is served with delicious relish, he regards it as from the ancestral spirits. The role of the ancestral spirits is also revealed the first time Haripotse meets Tanganeropa, whom he thought had not survived Ndyire's war against his family. The old man attributes Tanganeropa's survival to divine protection and thanks to them. Thus, the author is informing his readers that:

just as they respect living elders even more so the spirits of ancestors are remembered and respected but not feared because their blessings are important to personal and community well-being (Kazembe, 2009: 56).

The Shona learners are taught to respect the living dead for their protecting influence.

It was pointed out that respect for ancestral spirits also included communication of every development through prayer (poems). Male teacher C highlighted:

Vakuru vedu vaitodeketera kuvadzimu pane zvose zvavaiita kuratidza rukudzo. [Our elders used to venerate and inform their ancestral spirits of all they were doing as a form of respect].

According to Ulvestad (2012: 45),

prayer connects the visible and the invisible world. It is a communication, a petition between the visible and the invisible world. The main goal is the maintenance of harmony between persons in the visible world and between them and the invisible world.

The people believe that their ancestors listen to them and act accordingly. The communication was believed to bring harmony in society and between the living and the dead. Chakaipa portrays this in *Pfumo Reropa* when Haripotse introduces Tanganeropa to the ancestral spirits and the purpose of their visit to the clan's cave through poetry saying:

Onai vari kumhepo, ndasvika pano pamusha penyu. Ndauya nomwana wenyu, ndava namakore ndisati ndatsika pano zvino ndinoda kupedzisa zviya zvamakati zvinofanira kuitirwa pano pamusha penyu (54).

[See the ancestors; I am here at your place. I have brought your son, after a long time since I have been here; I want to accomplish what you instructed me to do here].

Haripotse addresses the ancestral spirit with respect. He speaks to them believing that they are hearing his agenda for coming. He even apologises for taking too long before visiting the ancestral spirits. Haripotse wants to cleanse himself before the ancestral spirits so that he and Tanganeropa can get guidance from the spirits and accomplish their mission. In *Kunyarara Hakusi Kutaura?*, VaNhanganga informs the family ancestral spirits about Eric's engagement party with Martha and praises them for the success. This is the norm among the Shona that every step in their lives should be communicated to their ancestral spirits. VaNhanganga believes that the marriage itself needs the blessing from the ancestors for it to be successful. The cited events, therefore, teach the school learners who study these novels that poems are a powerful means of communication between the living and the dead. The skills of reciting the poems are also displayed in Haripotse and VaNhanganga's verses.

A person with *unhu* seeks and acts upon spiritual guidance in all things. Chakaipa in *Pfumo Reropa* teaches the Shona readership these values through Tanganeropa who asks for guidance from his ancestral spirits so that he can revenge on the Ndyires who had killed his family members. Guidance is granted because he manages to destroy them and take over the kingship. Also, when Tanganeropa skilfully kills a lion, Haripotse attributes it to the anointing from the ancestral spirits. On this, Chakaipa portrays the Shona as people who believed in the hand of the ancestral spirits in every sphere of life. However, one should never seek guidance from the ancestral spirits to do wrong things. This is seen when Handidiwe loudly wishes her ancestral spirits to intervene in killing Munhamo using a poisoned egg so that she would be loved by Ndyire. She is punished by the gods because instead her husband eats the egg and dies. Munhamo survives the attack because she is innocent. Her life is protected by the ancestral spirits who are more powerful than her. Thus, through the novel, learners gain knowledge of adherence to their religion for protection.

The *unhu* value of respect for the Shona belief that a dead person's spirit can fight against any form of disrespect to the deceased, despite the age, sex or status is captured in novels. Female Teacher A highlighted that the novels present an important aspect to teach the learners saying:

Vana vedu ngavazive kuti ngozi iriko chero ukanamata? Mukasaitenda yauya mumhuri munoparara [Our children need to know that avenging spirits are real even if you are a Christian. If you do not believe in it when it is in your family you will be destroyed].

The teacher seems to suggest that there are some Shona people who do not admit that avenging spirits are real because they are Christians. The novels, therefore, teach the youngsters that they should accept that it is a reality and when they face it, they need to appease the spirits and not hide behind prayers. Thus they fulfil the Afrocentric role of the

literature of providing the right face with the African values that have been despised as superstitious and primitive (Mawere, 2014). In *Pfumo Reropa*, Chakaipa presents different situations that can attract *ngozi*. Firstly, keeping a child who does not belong to the clan is believed to draw the ire of evil spirits. Tanganeropa is not a biological son to Ndyire and so at the chief's death, he is removed from the family so as to avoid *ngozi*. Secondly, the Shona people also believe that a mother should be respected to avoid *ngozi*. Tanganeropa is advised by Haripotse not to attack his mother for not revealing his identity to him as that could attract *ngozi*. Thirdly, Chakaipa presents the view that taking dead people's possessions, especially those of strangers, attracts *ngozi*. For instance, when Tanganeropa and other men are on their way to *vaZungu* (the Portuguese), some of them fall prey to lions but Tanganeropa and the other survivors leave behind the dead's possessions (gold and ivory) in fear of *ngozi*. In *Kunyarara Hakusi Kutaura?*, the author makes constant reference to the curse of *ngozi* among VaNhangas's children because they are not taking care of her. Mungoshi raises the issue through VaNhangas herself (p.2, p.113) Sharon (p.21) Martha (p.31) Norika (p.61, p.71) Kwanhurai (p.112). The Shona's belief in avenging spirits (*ngozi*) enhances peace and harmony among the society. Not only among the Shona is *ngozi* feared, but also among many African societies. Makaudze (1998) presents the avenging spirits as a myth that helps establish peaceful relations in the Zulu and the Mashingo societies as the people regulate their social behaviour in order to avoid future disasters in their families. Hence, a reference to *ngozi* in the selected texts helps in promoting respect towards the traditional myths among learners for the good of the society.

The *unhu* philosophy dictates that the deceased's final words should be respected. This is illustrated in *Pfumo Reropa* where Haripotse constantly refers to what Tanganeropa's ancestral spirits had told him to do for the family throughout their journey; to forge a spear. As directed by Nhindiri, Tanganeropa's grandfather in his last days, Haripotse shows Tanga the riches left by his forefathers. Haripotse forges Tanga's spear exactly the way he was instructed by Tanganeropa's late grandfather. Upon completion, Haripotse is relieved for having accomplished the dead's instruction. Thus, the Shona found comfort in respecting the will of the dead. They were not as greedy as some are today. Many people have fallen into trouble because of failure to honour the dead's wishes, especially pertaining to the distribution of wealth. Hence, the writer teaches the readers to desist from greed but to respect the dead's wishes.

Unhu specifies that the rural home is the custodian of culture and therefore should be respected. Male Teacher A justified this belief saying:

This is why all traditional ritual ceremonies are done *kumusha*. [This is why all traditional ritual ceremonies are performed in the rural areas]

The Shona believe that rural land is where the traditional roots and spiritual connectedness are found. It is common among Shona people that when one faces problems in the city, one goes back to the centre – the rural home. They return to the rural home where the ancestral spirits reside and perform the necessary rituals. Therefore, among the Shona, a man with *unhu* should have a rural home. VaNhangas is troubled because her two sons do not have rural homes. When Mazarura reveals to her that he intends to convince his younger brother Eric so that they have rural homes, the mother is happy and attributes the development to her ancestral spirits. It is also believed that for the supernatural to perform their duties fully, the rural home should be headed by a male person. In *Kunyarara Hakusi Kutaura?* VaNhangas reveals that her rural home needs a male individual. She is pained by the fact that her home has lost the dignity it is supposed to have because her sons no longer cherish rural life. This implies that urban homes are not recognised by the spirits. While people can stay and build homes in the cities, the Shona believe that a good man should consider building and maintaining a rural home. The readership can learn that the rural home is crucial and should not be neglected because as it is the reservoir of *unhu*.

Unhu worldview cherishes respect for religious ceremonies. The respect involves participation "in the rituals, ceremonies, festivals and beliefs of the community" (Ulvestad, 2012: 11). This is illustrated in *Kunyarara Hakusi Kutaura?* when VaNhangas says:

Zvatiri kungoonazve vamwe vachiti nyika yakauya ivo vongosweromhanya nekurova makuva nokupira midzimu yavo, zvinhu zvavo zvichingofambira mberi takatarisa...kukundwa here nezvana zvaKwanhurai zvanezuro uno zvazadza matanga nemombe? (p.2)

[we are seeing others in today's world appeasing their spirits and prospering while we are watching why being overtaken by Kwanhurai's young boys who now have a lot of cattle?]

VaNhangas believes that there is a need for that interaction between the dead and the living through „*kurova guva*“ for ancestral blessings. This implies that through the novel, readers can learn to constantly make supplications to the spirit world so that they get all the support they may need in their lives. As the author's mouthpiece, VaNhangas is reminding the Shona people to remain attached to their religion for them to develop. The respect for ritual ceremonies is also demonstrated by the Ndyire clan. Chakaipa realistically portrays the „*kurova guva*“ ritual for Shona students to gain knowledge on this religious aspect. The Shona people believe that when adults die, they should be brought back into the family so that they can protect family members. The rituals are performed a year or two after the death. Failure to perform the ceremony correctly, by altering any detail or the already

accepted beliefs and customs in the ceremony, is believed to anger the spirits. The ceremony is, therefore, respected and performed with great care so that the deceased become happy. The *kurova guva* ritual is performed for Ndyire and his wife and possessions are distributed to his relatives. Thus, the readers are taught that the Shona peoples' religious cosmology includes both the living and the „living“ dead. The „living dead should be brought back home through the *kurova guva* ceremony so that they can perform their roles in shaping the lives of the living (Makaudze, 1998). This section, therefore, examined how the Shona people's belief in spirituality is portrayed in the selected novels for learners who study them to benefit.

Unhu and religious morality

From the traditional religious beliefs and practices, the Shona

establish right from wrong, good and appropriate from bad and inappropriate behaviour. Children and adults learn right from wrong and what is appropriate or inappropriate in every situation that they face (Kazembe, 2009: 55).

Thus, members of society are expected to apply what they learn from different religious beliefs and practices so as to be morally upright.

Unhu respects moral uprightness which it regards as a gift from the ancestral spirits. The Shona, like most Africans, actually believe that God is the founder and guardian of morality (Evans-Pritchard, 1956). This is portrayed in *Pfumo Reropa*, where Tanganeropa's good behaviour is regarded by Haripotse as a blessing from *vadzimu* and that his good character attracts more blessings in his life. This is also depicted in *Kunyarara Hakusi Kutaura?* where Martha, because of her good morals, is referred to as from the ancestral spirits. Gelfand (1992) supports this idea where he notes that goodness was attributed to the beneficial influence of the ancestral spirits (*midzimu*). An individual who has the protective support of his ancestral spirits can be certain that all will go well for him and his family and, moreover, his character will be good. This teaches the readers that an individual should live virtuously to please the ancestral spirits and God himself so as to be blessed.

In *unhu* philosophy, the dead's spirits require respect for humanity. According to Kazembe (2009: 55) "offences, wickedness, violation of societal norms and other sinful acts are not spared by God according to traditional African religion". The belief among the Shona that whenever people fail to respect humanity they are bound to be punished either as a correctional measure or as a lesson to other society members is made clear in all the three selected novels. Although most of the culprits in the stories are punished by death, the authors have been successful in educating and reminding the Shona to respect humanity. For example, in *Pfumo Reropa*, Chakaipa punishes chief Ndyire by death for

killing innocent souls, Murwarazhizha for poisoning Munhamo and her kids and the false diviner for causing multiple deaths. *Kunyarara Hakusi Kutaura?* presents a death penalty to Lorna for cheating with Eric. Eric faces arrest for committing adultery with his brother's wife and for his pride. In *Ndafa Here?* Wati is punished with illness for neglecting his wife and daughter. For the Shona, the punishments are determined by the gods as they believe that when one does anything wrong, one has wronged the gods. As such, they emphasise that sooner or later ill will follow the wrong conduct as goodwill follow the right conduct. This is so because the laws are formulated and justified in the name of the ancestral spirits and in search of peace and stability among societies (Ramose, 1999). Punishments are meant to minimise the abuse of rules and enhance harmony in human relations.

Unhu and identity

In the *unhu* worldview, individuals are expected to know and respect their identity. This implies that among the Shona,

[a] person with *hunhu/ubuntu* should know him/herself, the group to which he/she belongs and the generality of the society of which he/she is part (Sibanda, 2014: 27).

In the Shona societies, totems act as one respected form of identity which binds tribes together. Individuals are therefore expected to live among blood relatives from an early age. According to Rukuni (2007: 50), the totem is respected because it is

a way of knowing that before I even achieve anything with my life and in myself, I already own all the major achievements of my ancestors. I carry with me the celebration of their successes and the lessons of their failures, but above all, I am here to continue the great deeds of my people.

Totems, therefore, give pride, self-belief and self-confidence to Shona people (ibid). A person loses respect from society and confidence among others if he does not know his totemic identity. According to Rukuni (2007: 48-49), "there is no crisis among the Shona that is bigger than the crisis of losing your identity". Tanganeropa, in *Pfumo Reropa*, is totally disturbed by the fact that he had not lived with the men of his own totem resulting in his acquiring a wrong identity for many years. He tries to recreate it to regain his happiness. He tells his mother that:

maidai musina kundivanza rudzi rwangu
(p.50) [you shouldn't have hidden my identity from me]

When Tanganeropa discovers his true family, he finds pride in his true identity. Whenever he fights, he is inspired by his identity. He always utters:

ini mwana wavaShizha muzukuru waNhindiri(p.65, p.79) [I the son of Shizha, grandson to Nhindiri] while approaching his enemies.

This shows that totemic identity is powerful among the Shona. Tanganeropa is inspired by his identity to fight and win battles. In all the battles, Tanganeropa is a hero. In *Kunyarara Hakusi Kutaura?* VaNhanganga always addresses her sons using their totem *Ngara, Chikandamina, Zimuto* as a sign of respect for they are now grown up. In *Ndafa Here?* Female Teacher C cited that Kiri's children are not respected by members of her family and the society at large because their fathers and totems are not known. It is a shame among the Shona for a daughter to bring home children whose fathers and totems are not known. These examples teach the young readers of the value of totems in the Shona life and warn girls from bringing home children who have no known totems as it might bring shame to the whole clan. Such literature that brings forth issues that define its people is applauded in Afrocentricity. Shona novels can, therefore, be used to impart *unhu* in schools.

Ulvestad (2012: 49) posits that:

In the ubuntu worldview every human being is viewed both in his or her collective identity as a member of the community and in his or her personal identity as a unique individual.

This means that individuals with *unhu* should carry both community identity and their distinctiveness as individuals. For one to possess community identity, he/she should adhere to the dictates of his/her community culture (Kazembe, 2009: 56). This is why characters like Mazarura and Eric in *Kunyarara Hakusi Kutaura?* who choose to live according to foreign cultures are criticised for lack of *unhu*. Rukuni (2007) considers loss of cultural identity as a serious problem that needs attention. Teaching Shona learners *unhu* through novels can help in addressing the problem.

Unhu and the natural environment

The *unhu* philosophy celebrates, respects and cares for the physical nature. Mbiti (1969: 48) shows that the environment is valued as part of the religious universe and reflection of God. He says:

According to African people, man lives in a religious universe, so that natural phenomena and objects are intimately associated with God. ... Man sees in the universe not only the imprint but the reflection of God.

This implies that the pre-colonial Shona society lived in harmony with the physical environment. The relationship between humans and nature is portrayed in *Pfumo Reropa*. Chakaipa presents virgin forests with wild fruits and animals.

Nature was preserved and there was a balance between humans and the natural environment. Today, the natural environment has been disturbed largely in the name of technological advancement. According to Ramose (1999: 157), "the loss of this balance constitutes a violation of botho [*unhu*]. It is also an indication of the need to restore botho in the sphere of the relations between human beings and physical nature". Rukuni (2007: 113) emphasises this value saying "all God's creations are sacred. Celebrate, respect and appreciate nature and all God's creations". This argument gives centrality to the black peoples' moral principles and values in the African culture (Asante, 2009). This presentation, therefore, teaches the Shona learners *unhu* in relation to their conduct with the environment.

Unhu and traditional doctors and medicines

In the *unhu* worldview, medicine-doctors should be respected. According to Ulvestad (2012:44), the medicine-doctor should be respected because of the fact that he:

symbolises the hopes of society: hopes of good health, protection and security from evil forces, prosperity and good fortune, and ritual cleansing when harm or impurities have been contracted.

This implies that traditional doctors are respected for the duties they perform in African society.

The above assertion explains why Chakaipa has been criticised by most teachers who were interviewed charging that Chakaipa negatively portrays the diviners as liars and disrespectful of human life as their medicines demanded human body parts. The author seems to be writing under the influence of efforts by colonial governments to despise, de-campaign and discredit traditional healing as „dirty“ (Sigauke, Chiwaura and Mawere, 2014). For example, Female Teacher E commented:

Chakaipa here fails to teach Shona beliefs. Not all African diviners used human body parts. Chakaipa negatively portrayed them because he was a Christian convert who was made to believe that everything African was heathen and diabolic.

However, Male teacher A justified Chakaipa's portrayal quoting the Shona proverb *Muromo wen'anga ibaradzi* [the mouth of a witch-doctor is a destroyer]. He argued that it is known among the Shona that traditional healers can make false pronouncements that can destroy, deceive and divide people. The teacher, therefore, believed that positive lessons can be drawn by learners from the presented deceiving diviner and the punishments he faces in the novel.

Ulvestad (2012) explains that in the *unhu* worldview, every member of society should be involved in traditional health care. The Shona have their own traditional medicines which they believe can cure all diseases. This is portrayed in *Pfumo*

Reropa, where VaMunhamo meets Ndyire in the forest while she is looking for medicine for her child. Here Chakaipa shows understanding of this traditional aspect although at times he succumbs to modern pressure in despising traditional health care. According to Oladipo (2004), resorting to traditional herbs and healers is loyalty to African religion because both come from the ancestral spirits whom the Shona believe have the power to heal all sicknesses if they wish to. Afrocentricity therefore, expects African writers to properly present, promote and preserve knowledge on traditional medicines and healing methods.

V. CONCLUSION

The above discussion shows that Shona novels are a reservoir of the Shona spiritual beliefs that are cherished by *unhu*. As such, the studied Chakaipa and Mungoshi's novels can be used in the teaching of the different cultural spiritual values that define the Shona people. Teachers are, however, urged to approach the teaching of *unhu* religious beliefs with caution in classes with mixed religions.

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