ENDOGENOUS CONFLICT RESOLUTION APPROACHES: THE ZEZURU PERSPECTIVE

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Obediah Dodo
Dedication

To the late Cleopas and Betty Dodo.
Acknowledgements

This is my second book and is a product of collective hard work by several heads and hands. I therefore would like to thank the following people for their help in coming up with such a detailed discussion on some of the most prominent endogenous conflict resolution mechanisms within the Zezuru society.

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Foreword

This publication is part of the journey that was initiated by the author in 1999 when he embarked on higher studies. The idea was to finally be part of the learned group in the society with a view to contribute in the governance system through writing and researches. Pursuant to that objective, the author started to write in 2010 on a variety of subjects before he settled for conflict resolution with a bias towards endogenous component.

This publication, which was started in 2012, is a compilation of various papers (Chapters) on various elements of endogenous conflict resolution mechanisms especially in the Zezuru culture on Zimbabwe. What is however of interest is that the book tries to discuss the traditional lifestyle of the Shona people and in particular the Zezuru group in relation to conflict prevention and resolution as they were practiced by the forefathers since time immemorial.

The book essentially discusses the following areas; as part of the several modes of conflict prevention and resolution methods. As an introduction, the book looks at homemade beers that are used during special cultural events such as weddings, funerals and spirit-appeasing ceremonies amongst others. These beers are still used in traditional ceremonies, though in some instances they are sold for subsistence purposes and as part of regular social gatherings. It also looks at silence that has been used by victims of injustices as a way of keeping away from constant reminders of the past suffering.

Briefly, the publication also discusses customs, compensation or reparation as a common method of settling disputes especially where one or the perpetrator would have caused the victim to lose his/her valuables. Closely akin to the above method, the publication also looks at marriage which brings together strangers creating strong bonds, seeing the continuation of the family name, solving conflicts and bringing labour into the family amongst others. However, interestingly, the book also discusses death as a conflict resolution measure. Death has in some cases been considered an option to conflicts where the death of a participant in a conflict marks the end of a conflict. Alongside death is the practice of appeasing the dead; a practice considered sacred in most communities as they remember and invite the spirits of the dead back into the villages.

‘Chisahwira’ is an endogenous conflict and dispute resolution mechanism which has been in use at various forums especially at funeral wakes, marriages, village disputes and other formal gatherings where
way-ward individuals in society are either reprimanded or reminded of their unbecoming behaviour by some personalities who are considered either as comic or witty.

In another chapter, the practice of jakwara is also discussed and how traditionally people regarded the practice and managed to preserve it as an engine for collective work and development. Another chapter also focuses on the ‘bira’ spiritual dance ceremony which is an all-night ritual in which family members call on ancestral spirits for direction and intervention. This practice is applied in various circumstances, all with a view to either resolve a conflict, register an appreciation or as a cultural rite. Story-telling as a conflict resolution and prevention method is also discussed as a closing conflict resolution method. While most of the stories were nurtured for the following reasons; to hold attention, re-live memories, humour, production of identity, education, entertainment and therapy, their long-term purpose was to impart wisdom and knowledge on life skills that ultimately contributed to conflict resolution and prevention methods. Concluding the discussion are some of the basic ‘tools’ required in-order to be effective in conflict prevention and resolution within the Shona societies.

It is hoped that all these conflict prevention and resolution methods that are presented in a particular sequence will be of interest and benefit to you. Cognizant of the fact that this book was written to create a permanent record of some of the Shona endogenous conflict prevention and resolution mechanisms; the discussions were taken down to the grassroots such that some of the jargon was also included to bring the practitioners’ flavour. It is also hoped that the other mechanisms will be discussed in other publications to follow.

Thank you.
Acronyms

ADR - Alternative Dispute Resolution
ADR M - Alternative Dispute Resolution Measures
ECRM – Endogenous Conflict Resolution Mechanism
FGD - Focus Group Discussion
HIV - Human Immuno Virus
Definition of Terms

Conflict resolution is a general practice which is used to attend to issues of instability and controversy with a view to reach an immediate solution.

Endogenous conflict resolution is a practice of attending to conflicts using mechanisms that are traditionally embedded in the cultures and lives of the local people.

Zezuru people are an ethnic sub-group of the Shona people mainly found in the central part of the Mashonaland region in Zimbabwe.
Chapter One

Endogenous Conflicts: An Introduction

"Zimbabwe, though still a very safe country in as far as conflicts are concerned, the rate of conflicts is also steadily rising arguably due to a variety of reasons amongst others: poverty, political polarization, youth bulge and unemployment, racial tension especially after the land reform period, and globalization that has imported western concepts on marriage, family fabric and drug use."

Introduction

Endogenous conflict resolution is a highly contested subject in the area of conflict and peace. Various scholars and researchers have written widely on the subject proffering various thoughts but during the process, have failed or partially addressed other pertinent issues like how the practices have contributed towards the current order and peace, how the systems could be sustained and how globalization could be integrated into the traditional practices so that the former does not swallow the latter as is the case. Notably, Pamela Machakanja, Martha Mutisi, Charles Pfukwa, Chiwome, Bourdillon, Masaka and Chemhuru and others have contributed in the understanding of this concept which, I strongly believe is fast losing relevance and place in this contemporary world unless there is some deliberate effort by relevant stakeholders of the likes of Education department, Culture, Law and Security, Youth and any other sectors, to ensure that young people are exposed to the traditional systems of governance, leadership and conflict resolution amongst others.

Africa’s rate of conflict is argued to be one of the highest, the world-over. Zimbabwe, though still a very safe country in as far as conflicts are concerned, the rate of conflicts is also steadily rising arguably due to a variety of reasons amongst others; poverty, political polarization, youth bulge and unemployment, racial tension especially after the land reform period, and globalization that has imported western concepts on marriage, family fabric and drug use. It is against this backdrop that a need for some community-imbedded solution be devised so that some of the conflicts may be attended to before they get out of hand.

This book amongst others, seeks to deepen the debate around endogenous conflict resolution with a particular focus on the Zezuru people of Zimbabwe. The book also tries to fill some of the gaps left by

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1 Prof. Machakanja and Dr Mutisi were my lecturers during my masters’ studies while Prof. Pfukwa is my Faculty Dean.
other scholars as cited above especially on the following areas; how endogenous conflict resolution practices have contributed towards the current order, how the systems could be sustained in the present society and the endogenous practices could be integrated into the globalization wave as a way of maintaining some relevance.

**Endogenous Conflict Resolution**

Conflict is prevalent in societies, amongst individuals and groups, and it is vital to manage it through methods that have been employed from the most primitive eras. Because conflicts are an essential component of human relations, one needs to learn to manage them, to attend to them in a way that prevents intensification and devastation, and devise inventive and ingenious concepts to resolve them. In recent years, (Shamir, n.d) the numerous conflict resolution tactics have turned out to be an extensively recognized area both of academic scholarship and of practice.

According to Jacobs in Mutisi (2009) and Kwaja (2009), ‘endogenous conflict resolution approaches’ denote systems that are within a specific cultural framework for handling conflicts. Endogenous approaches are found within traditional settings and culturally understood and owned by the local people for some time immemorial. Mutisi (2009) further posits that endogenous conflict resolution approaches are curative, context specific, exclusive, public, casual, and varied. In other societies, they make use of such practices like *Gacaca* in Rwanda and *Mato Oput* in Uganda (Mutisi, 2009), *Ekika* by the Baganda in Uganda (Sentongo, Bartoli, 2012), *Abunzi* mediation in Rwanda, *Mable* by the Afar in Ethiopia (Sansculotte-Greenidge, Fantaye, 2012), *Judiyya* in Darfur (Osman El-Tom, 2012), *Guurti* and *Dia* system in Somalia, *Moots* by the Kpelle of Liberia and *Mokgwa Le Molao* by the Tswana of Botswana, *Jir* system of the Tiv in Nigeria, *Curandeiros* of Mozambique, and *Ndendeuli* system of Tanzania. These systems have proven to be effective as they are developed within the same societies and made use of by the same people. Similarly, the Zezuru people have theirs categorized as adjudication, reconciliation, mediation, negotiation, and arbitration, which have served them for a long time. These include; *zviera* (taboo), *nhaurirano* (negotiation), *kuripa* (compensation), *dare* (court system), *jakwara* (communal task ceremonies), *bira* (ancestral dance ceremonies), and *pfonda* (dance ceremonies), *ndari* (traditional brews), *kurova guva* (appeasement of the dead), *kunyarara* (silence), *kutsiva* (retaliation), *kurwa* (fighting), *roora* (marriage), *ngano* (story-telling) and sometimes *rufu* (death) amongst others.
Endogenous Methods of Conflict Resolution

Like I alluded to above, there are several methods of endogenous conflict resolution, all with varying results and consequences. This book has been to some extent motivated by my PhD thesis\(^2\), which also influenced the publication of several other papers in refereed journals on the same subject matter. In some of the papers, I presented some of the methods that are traditionally used by the Zezuru people in addressing conflicts in society viz; traditional brew ‘doro’, marriage, ‘bira’ and silence of which some excerpts have been adapted in this book. Like all the other methods the world-over, all these endogenous methods are also defined by polarity between two extremes: competition versus cooperation and opposing interests versus common interests. These opposing extremes have in some cases affected the workability and effectiveness of the mechanisms so much so that the intended recipients have often dumped them for the contemporary mechanisms.

Traditional Brew

In the Zezuru communities, fermented beers are commonly prepared at home from locally grown grains like sorghum or rapoko. Traditionally, these homemade beers are used during special cultural events such as weddings, funerals and spirit-appeasing ceremonies amongst others. These beers are still used in traditional ceremonies, though in some instances they are sold for subsistence purposes and as part of regular social gatherings. The most common of these traditional beers is a seven-day brew called ‘rematanda’, ‘ndari’ or ‘ngoto’.

‘Doro’ has for some time now managed to bring different people together for some field work to be undertaken communally called ‘jakwara’. In the Zezuru community, traditional beer is a vital component in almost all traditional rituals; ‘kurova guva’ (returning the spirit of the dead into the village), ‘kuripa ngozi’ (compensating for a murder offence), ‘mukwerera’ (rain-making ceremony), ‘chenura’ (cleansing), ‘muchato’ (wedding) and thanksgiving ceremonies. During these ceremonies, different people are brought together so that collectively, some decision can be reached and where necessary, broken relations are reconstructed. During these ceremonies, especially ‘kurova guva’, ‘kuripa ngozi’ and ‘chenura’, it is believed that the spirits do not allow disputes or conflicts lest they will not be successful. As a result, the ceremonies are conducted peacefully and collectively. The fact that two or more parties have come together and shared ‘doro’ is significant and a symbol or the first steps towards reconciliation. There are also instances when beer by-products like ‘masvusvu’ serves as a drink. This therefore means that beer would have alleviated food poverty from communities.

\(^2\) My PhD studies at the University of Lusaka are being supervised by Prof Nsenduluka and Prof Kasanda, both from Zambia
Silence
Traditionally, silence has been used by victims of injustices as a way of keeping away from constant reminders of the past and possibly, buttressed by the 1979 approach by the liberation and former colonial movements; it has now become an official mode of healing and reconciliation.

Silence has often been associated with the coward, ignorant or the weaker part that fear that continued arguments can invite more conflicts which they are not able to contain. However, that is not correct as sometimes people maintain silence simply because there is no room for any talks or discussions. This is quite common with autocratic governance when people do not raise any concerns or complain and that is considered either contentment or loyalty.

Silence is traditionally known to pileup emotions and also forces people to lock their concerns and feelings deep down their hearts so much so that there will not be any one to hear, console and possibly forgive. Forgiveness and the reconstruction of relationships are only possible when former rivals dialogue, apologise and forgive each other.

Compensation ‘Kuripa’
In the Zimbabwean customs, compensation or reparation is a common method of settling disputes especially where one or the perpetrator would have caused the victim to lose his/her valuables. In such cases, negotiations are held before an agreement is reached as to how much is supposed to be paid as appropriate repayment or compensation. In Shona culture, it is called ‘kuripa’ and is highly recognized as a long-term cultural method of healing.

Traditionally, this method has been used to deter or keep cases of murder low as people feared to compensate through appeasing the spirits of the dead. This is a tedious and expensive process that in some cases requires the family of the perpetrator to surrender a virgin girl as compensation to the family of the victim. Compensation as a form of restorative justice can sometimes come in the form of public testimony.
and apology. In other situations, it involves monetary exchange in addition to public acknowledgement of responsibility for the crimes committed.

According to Wormer (2004), restorative justice very closely relates to social justice or fairness in that the victims and offenders each have their interests represented in the proceedings. Restorative initiatives are not limited to work with individuals and families but can also be successfully applied to the unjust treatment of whole populations. Wartime persecutions, rape of the people, slave labour, and mass murder are forms of crimes against humanity that demand some form of compensation for survivors and their families, even generations later, as long as the wounds are palpable, (Wormer, 2004). This simply indicates that whenever a society decides to ignore post-conflict disturbances especially where human blood is lost and humanity is maimed, the memories will not easily erase from the victims’ minds and the offence will not also fall away till some form of justice is delivered.

Adapted from Dodo et al (2012b: 12)

The compensation concept has for a long time been employed by various communities, the world over. Even in the western world or the Asian community, the practice has been in existence as evidenced by the writings of Aristotle back-dating to over two thousand years and more recently, John Rawls, Immanuel Kant and others. However, in this discussion, the type of compensation refers to the traditional dimension whereby parties seek restoration of the damaged properties or hurt feelings by the perpetrator. In the Zezuru culture, compensation and reparation are recognized as long-term methods of healing and settling disputes.

Most scholars including Velasquez et al (1990) argue that the discussion on compensation cannot be complete without aligning it to justice and fairness in society. According to Aristotle in his early definitions of justice, he argued that people ought to be treated alike, except if they are different in ways that are pertinent to the circumstances in which they are involved while fairness refers to one’s capability to judge without allusion to one’s emotional state or interests.

Following the same argument, it is also posited that there are various types of justice which are employed in society depending on the situation and people handling the situation. The types of justice include the following; distributive justice which looks at how benefits and problems are distributed within the society; retributive or corrective justice, which focuses on how what might have been wronged has been
corrected and compensatory justice which focuses on the magnitude to which victims are paid for their loses by their perpetrators. It is also argued in the Zezuru culture that whenever one has been wronged, there has to be some form of correction to the victim and compensation where possible. Unlike in the western approach to compensation where there is what is called victim compensation (Haveripeth, 2013) - payment made from state coffers to victims of wrongdoing, in the Zezuru culture, it is either the particular perpetrator or his/her immediate family that pays back. According Kazembe (2010), in the Zezuru tradition, every deceased who would have been wronged must be compensated before he or she can be part of the ancestors. The idea behind this is to ensure that the perpetrator feels the challenge and pain of parting with hard earned resources. It is also a way of trying to deter would-be offenders from committing similar offences in future.

Traditional Court Systems

The contemporary world now believes that the use of the law is the best way to deal with all social problems, especially crime and delinquency. It is believed that without the law, the people would not control themselves and a state of anarchy would exist. According to Jenkins (2004), the rule of law concept lies in the Eurocentric paradigm that assumes that the state, rather than the community, carries the responsibility of dealing with crime and other social problems. This approach, which is derived from English common law, uses the state as the primary agent in dealing with the behaviour of individuals, treatment of offenders, and compensation for victims. However, prior to that, there was the traditional court system headed by traditional leaders that operated effectively and efficiently.

Traditional leaders are hereditary local community leaders who are selected through rules of succession. These have been in existence since time immemorial as they have been the governing structures on the ground that were solemnized by the spirit mediums of the local areas in consultation with the local elders and the generality of the community. Resultantly, they commanded profound respect among rural communities. Traditional leaders’ role in the pre-colonial period was to administer all the resources, human and natural and to adjudicate over any disputes within their area of jurisdiction.

In Zimbabwe, traditional authorities exist through the Traditional Leaders Act, (www.mlgpwud.gov.zw). Traditional leaders’ courts are also deemed to be fair, cheap and by the community’ door step, are culture bound and take more lenient and fair way of dispute resolution which is preferred by the communities rather than going to the modern and elitist courts. This system is people centred and allows participatory
governance. The Chief’s policies are reviewed through general meetings, village councils and by other interested special groups.

*Adapted from Dodo et al (2012b: 12)*

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**Marriage**

One of the most respected institutions involved in conflict resolution in the Zezuru culture is marriage. It is believed that marriage brings together strangers creating strong bonds, sees the continuation of the family name, solves conflicts and brings labour into the family amongst others. In the Zezuru culture marriage is basically the coming together of two or more parties of different sex for procreation. This is unlike the contemporary and realist liberal view which allows same-sex relationships. The Zezuru belief closely tallies with the three ideals that were propounded by St Augustine; the ‘*bonum prolis*’, children, the ‘*bonum fidei*’ unity, and the ‘*bonum sacramenti*’ which is indissolubility. Magesa (1998) gives out that societies involved in marriage share their lives and turn out to be one people, uniting their families and clans so that what is done to one of their associates is done to all. It is also argued that marriage partners’ responsibilities are not restricted to them alone but have a broader application.

From a Zezuru point of view, a marriage is defined by some key aspects which include; handover of a woman’s legal rights from her folks to her husband. This implies that a husband enjoys and controls all the rights to the wife’s labour, sexuality and offspring’s and the rights to demand reparation for the damage done to her by others. Marriage is also understood to adjust and to some extent, break, the relationships between the wife and her direct relatives. The other aspect to marriage is that marriage is a covenant and agreement between two families that serves as a structural link between formerly strange parties.

It has however been observed that the marriage institution is dwindling and losing its value due to a variety of challenges; single parenthood, divorce, separations, rape, homosexuality, lesbianism and prostitution, (Kyalo, 2012) poverty, employment, human rights definition and equality, modernity, entertainment and dishonesty amongst others. Some ‘lobola’ demands by some families are just out of this world as they seek to destroy relationships rather than build.

It has also been observed that marriages are being transformed and affected by several other factors; families abandoning key traditional practices in favor of modern ones, changes in family structures,
fosterage, migration, changes in marriage ages and increased cases of polygynous marriages in the form of ‘small-houses’. These factors have forced serious transformations in marriage roles and family structures so much so that the concept of male head of the family is almost non-existent in the present families. Equality and how partners contribute economically into the family has also played a role in the changes.

*Adapted from Dodo O. (2014:2)*

**Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR)**

Alternative Dispute Resolution consists of different methodologies for solving differences in an amicable fashion, stretching from mediation, negotiation, arbitration to consensus building, and adjudication amongst others. Alternative dispute resolution exists following a philosophical understanding that conflicts are part of human society; they are like sex as argued by John Burton. Similarly, like humanity, ADR is equally old and has been applied in various situations by different people and parties. Negotiation, for argument’s sake was also applied by Abraham when he pleaded with God over the fate of the people of Sodom and Gomorra. However, it is important to note that this book seeks to focus on endogenous conflict resolution methods (ECRM) rather than alternative dispute resolution measures (ADRM). Therefore, not much is discussed in that regard.

Adjudication as an alternative dispute resolution means may be applied through the courts that have the power to enforce some of the agreements and proposals. It is a measure meant to ensure that an amicable solution is made involving all the concerned stakeholders

Consensus building is an attempt to reach decisions in which the needs of all the parties concerned are met while they are allowed to partake on their own accord, support the process, and ensure success. Consensus building is about a decision and agreement gotten by all the identified stakeholders. Through consensus building, the interested parties generate new and more effective alternatives to address the problem at hand (Zartman, 1999).

One of the several dispute resolution mechanisms available for most conflicts is arbitration. This is practice whereby a neutral third party can act as a go-between, hear the conflicting parties’ points of view and make a decision which can be obligatory, or voluntary depending on the contract made earlier.
Negotiation is a systematic method in which stakeholders to a dispute talk over conceivable conclusions directly with each other. The direct talks according to Ury et al., (1993) could be taken through three approaches; interest-based (moving the attention of the discussion from positions to interests), rights-based (turning to the court ending up as a legal process), and power-based (turning to violence).

Another of the various alternative dispute resolution measures is mediation, a method that uses a middle-of-the-road person to expedite talks between the individuals to a dispute so that a jointly recognized determination is obtained. This is a voluntary process where either of the parties can freely walk out without being forced by the law.

Summary
The chapter focused on some of the prominent mechanisms that have traditionally been employed by the Zezuru people in attending to their conflicts in society. Though the discussion might not have touched on all the methods presently in use or those once used, some of the systems that were gathered during the studies towards the compilation of this book are as follows; zviera (taboo), nhaurirano (negotiation), kuripa (compensation), dare (court system), jakwara (communal task ceremonies), bira (ancestral dance ceremonies), and pfonda (dance ceremonies), ndari (traditional brews), kurova guva (appeasement of the dead), kunyarara (silence), kutsiva (retaliation), kurwa (fighting), roora (marriage) and sometimes rufu (death) amongst others. The chapter also noted that where one method failed, another could be handy. It was also observed that while some of the mechanisms are losing relevance owing to the advent of the westernized contemporary systems, there may be need for upgrading of some of these systems so that they move with time and modernity thereby retaining their relevance.

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Chapter Two

The Zezuru and Conflicts

‘The Zezuru people are naturally a quiet and peace-loving lot’.

Introduction

This chapter focuses on the Zezuru people in Zimbabwe especially on the following issues; their background, traditional belief systems and their conception of traditional conflict resolution strategies. The chapter also focuses on the various conflicts that traditionally affect this group of people and how they have responded. It basically seeks to put the reader into proper perspective as regards the relationship between the Zezuru people and their traditional belief systems.

Zezuru People

Zimbabwe is basically inhabited by two nations; the Ndebele and the Shona. The Shona nation consists of various subgroups; Karanga, Zezuru, Manyika, Korekore and Ndau collectively constituting 72% of the total population while the Ndebele constitute about 12%. However, within the Shona group, the Zezuru take up about 18% of the population (Owomoyela, 2002, Dodo et al, 2012). The Shona migrated from the Shaba area of the Congo around 10th century and became the most dominant occupants (Owomoyela, 2002). They believe in ‘Mwari’ God, the most high through the ‘Mudzimu’ spirits. Within the belief system, the Zezuru people hold in high esteem the concept of a second life in the spiritual world, communal conflict resolution supported by invisible spirits and that death is an irreversible end to life (Makondo, 2007). Within the Shona, there are six key vernaculars which are divided into over thirty minor ones, with Zezuru enjoying an honoured position. It is the official language that is used in both schools and national broadcasting services and the group dominates in governance systems.

The Zezuru are mainly farmers, growing millet, sorghum, and maize, and keep cattle, which serve as status symbols and means of exchange. The key component of their staple food is sadza (maize-meal thick porridge). In Zimbabwe, the Zezuru people are mainly found in Mashonaland East province, Mashonaland Central and West provinces while there are some pockets in Manicaland and Midlands provinces.
Conflict Resolution
Conflict is common in any healthy relationship. However, when a conflict is managed badly, it can cause serious damage to a relationship, but when managed in a courteous and constructive way, conflict offers a chance to reinforce the link between two parties. A conflict arises whenever parties or individuals differ over their principles, inspirations, opinions, thoughts, or needs. At times these differences seem inconsequential, but when a conflict generates strong feelings, a profound personal need is frequently at the centre of the problem (Bob-Manuel, 2000).

Conflict resolution is a general practice which is used to attend to issues of instability and controversy with a view to reach an immediate solution (Bukari, 2013). It attempts to create solutions through a joint-problem solving method. When a conflict is effectively determined, the conflict is converted and develops into a catalyst for development (Bukari, 2013). Conflict resolution ends a conflict leaving the wrangling groups satisfied and the conflict sincerely and rightly fixed. There are various methodologies and techniques that could be used in conflict resolution some of which include the following; collaboration, arbitration, mediation, negotiation, and conciliation, peace dialogues and peace education. However, the best technique could rest on to a large extent, the nature and form of conflict involved (Konteh, 2006).

There are also endogenous conflict resolution mechanisms which have traditionally sustained Africans ever since time immemorial and are all grounded on the customs, understanding, and history of a community (Nwolise, 2005). Conducting some of these mechanisms requires the experience and wisdom of traditional chiefs, healers, elders and other traditional figures like village-heads, kraal-heads and Headmen. Indigenous conflict resolution does not only look at judgment of who is right or wrong and the retribution of wrongdoers, it also focuses on compromise and reunion of the parties to end conflict (Boege, 2006). Most indigenous methods are all-inclusive and consensus-based and frequently include the input of all stakeholders as well as the whole community.

Zezuru Conflicts
When the white settlers moved into the present Zimbabwe during the 1890s, they took over most of the fertile and habitable land and during the process pushed the indigenous people to semi-arid lands. In 1903, the then settler regime established the Reserve Act which sought to establish areas for blacks termed reserves (Tribal Trust Lands). This left the black Africans with no adequate and tillable land culminating into a land crisis. The Zezuru people were also some of the most affected indigenous people
to lose their land as they were pushed to the semi-arid areas of Mhondoro, Chikomba, Wedza, Chiweshe and others. It is therefore in these areas that people have been facing severe land crisis as most of the new families created along the generations had no land for both residence and farming. It has been till the 2000 land reform programme which eased pressure in the rural areas that people were scrambling for tiny pieces of land, some to a point of even fighting and resorting to witch-craft. Besides fighting for land, some fought over boundary lines and the resources that were along those boundaries like trees, thatching grass, mushroom and others.

Closely akin to the above conflict is the resource-based type of conflicts which are prevalent within the Zezuru areas. It must be realized that the Reserve Act pushed these people onto semi-arid lands where there were no valuable natural resources to survive on. Therefore, the few resources that were available ended up getting depleted and leading to conflicts. Such resources include water, pastures, wild fruits, fire-wood, and vleis, thatching grass and wild animals amongst others.

The Zezuru people are naturally a quiet and peace-loving lot. Historically, they have not been involved in unjustified conflicts, violence or wars. However, one of the most prominent conflicts that has characterised these people is to do with adultery. Because of beer drinking effects and a generally growing poverty level, some families have failed to hold enough to deter external influences so much so that some members of the families have found themselves crossing the borders for economic fortunes. Some have just decided to augment their income by finding alternative love. Some people have managed to lure married parties taking advantage of drunkenness. Over the years, this behaviour has created conflicts both within the families and outside of the family structures. There have been various cases of people either killing each other or committing suicide over adultery matters.

Areas like Wedza, Chikomba and Mhondoro are usually associated with peace. However, there are instances when people resort to witch-craft in-order to achieve their set goals and possibly out-do their rivals. Within these communities, there have been reports of witch-craft as people fought for survival and prosperity. This method of security was also applied when people lost their valuables like livestock and other household goods. Probably because of these districts’ proximity to the major cities of Harare, Masvingo and Marondera, there was a ready market for beef so much so that rustlers found motivation to steal cattle.
The district of Marondera especially the Seke and Chiota area has been known for rampant cases of murders. Since the 1960s up till the 1980s, Chiota area was notorious for violence and murders. Some of these conflicts did not require the police to regulate, rather, there was need for the use of the traditional systems and beliefs as very few of the perpetrators were accounted for. Therefore, it only needed people to be guided by their conscience and not laws.

**Summary**

The chapter briefly went through the background of the Zezuru people as they have lived in the Mashonaland region ever since the colonial settlers’ discriminatory laws of 1903. It also touched on some of the prominent conflicts that characterise the Zezuru people and the major causes of such conflicts. The scope of the chapter was basically to put the reader into proper perspective as regards where the group of people is coming from, where it is today and how it has managed to achieve that much.

**References**


Chapter Three

Death as a Conflict Resolution Measure

‘Some of these conflicts have naturally solved following the removal of some elements’.

Introduction

Death is an emotional occurrence that worries humankind. It has since time immemorial occupied an undesirable position in society. Death has haunted the entire society causing sorrow and indescribable misery. In the Zezuru community, it has been described differently; ‘rufu (parting away), nhamo (challenges), kufa (cessation of life), kutisiya (departing), kutungamira (lead the journey), kuperara (demise) and kuzorora (rest)’ amongst others with the dead body ‘mutumbi’ or ‘chitunha’ having to be buried. Families and communities that have been affected by death have struggled to stand on their feet following the loss of loved ones, unbudgeted expenditure during the funeral, failure to adapt to lives without another part of the engine and in some cases, conflicts over inheritance. However, it has in some cases been considered an option to conflicts where the death of a participant in a conflict marks the end of a conflict. It is therefore the position of this argument that death is indeed a means to conflict resolution in the Zezuru people in Zimbabwe.

Background

In the Zezuru society, there have been various types of conflicts ranging from decision-making related, wealth distribution, leadership and others, which the generality of society has wondered how they could be solved amicably. In other cases, people have fatally fought and dispossessed each other of their valuables without any workable solution in sight.

From a Zezuru perspective, death has been received with grief regardless of the deceased’s position in society and the cause of death. Its impact on humankind has remained severe, touching the lives of people emotionally. It is a phenomenon that humankind has fought to come to terms with. It has often been wondered if death, sacred as it is, could be of any other use other than bringing sorrow and grief to humanity. Other sections of the society have often queried if death could in any way solve any conflict in society? However, within the Zezuru community, there have been some conflicts perpetuated by death,
over a variety of issues which have been problematic in trying to solve. Some of these conflicts have naturally solved following the removal of some elements; some personalities and groups of people. Various beliefs and conceptions about death have been sustained for a long time within the Shona and other African communities. The sustenance of these positions has not been so much supported by any credible theory or model but by an element of fear and a culture of belief inherent in people. In this chapter, effort is directed towards establishing whether death as a phenomenon could serve as a conflict resolution mechanism in society. To unravel this, the debate is supported by what other societies say and how they view death in the Zezuru community as described by a Zezuru saying, ‘Mwari vaita kuda kwavo’ (God’s will has been fulfilled).

**Death in the Zezuru culture**

Death is one phenomenon that is as old as humanity and that has been part of every family and community the world-over. It is a concept which has not been clearly studied especially that part of the destination where recipients ultimately go to. It is only its origin which has been partly explained from a Christian perspective which Genesis 3 verse 19 aptly clarifies, “By the sweat of your face you will eat bread, till you return to the ground, because from it you were taken; for you are dust and to dust you shall return” (NKJV 1982:7).

However, from an African traditional view, that concept has not been explained save to believe that all the deceased ‘muchakabvu’ go to some unknown place in the atmosphere which the Zezuru people refer to as ‘Nyikadzimu’. It has been pointed out in various circles that death is one of life’s few inevitabilities. Death is a worldwide, normal, stubborn, unavoidable, inescapable, and indisputable fact of life. It is defined as the irrevocable end of life. From an African perspective, death is the foundation of a person's deeper bond with the creator, fulfillment of life and the commencement of communication between the visible and the spiritual worlds (Makondo, 2007). Other circles view death as an element that destroys relationships ‘muparadzi’, a force that creates a barrier between friendly institutions and a whirlwind that influences change that is not intended or planned. According to Makondo (2007), death takes away some people considered very important in society leaving a gap that is sometimes difficult to fill ‘pasipanodya’. Death is also viewed as having brought unending and unnecessary suffering within some communities hence the term ‘rufu ndimadzongonyedze’. According to Sitshebo (2000), death is understood to be both a natural and an unnatural occurrence which is always considered as triggered by some outside force. Some of the euphemisms used by Sitshebo (2000) to describe death like; “waenda’ (has gone), ‘wapera’ (is finished), ‘washaya’ (has vanished) and ‘watisiya’ (has left us)” (p.32),
indirectly express the notion of moving from one point to another, clearly indicating that the deceased remains a member of the family, since getting from one place to another does not cut relationships.

Other views about death have differed depending on the location on the world globe, religious beliefs and time vis-à-vis globalization and development. Freeman (2005) identifies four distinct types of death as; social death, signifying the figurative death of an individual in the world that he/she had known as a result of anticipatory sorrow by friends and family, psychological death denoting the death of features of the dying individual’s persona. This looks at how some dying individuals experience the grieving process. It also looks at how the dying individual’s experience about the loss may bring about changes in the individual’s character. There is also biological death, which is about the organism as a human unit no-longer existing and physiological death which also occurs when there is an end to the operation of all important body parts.

After death, the body has to be buried at a proper place and in a peaceful and respectful manner. Burial is a process of disposing of the corpse in a proper manner and in a respectfully dug hole called grave where the body will never be seen again. To ensure that the body is never uprooted, tempered with or never returns for whatever reason, the grave is filled with rocks and other heavy material before it is filled with earth and then plastered with cement. Besides, the plastering of the grave makes it look beautiful and is a way of showing love and respect to the dead. The way in which a dead person is buried reflects the nature of relationship that existed between the deceased and the living. During the funeral, a beast is slaughtered ‘mombe yenheedzo’ to serve as relish and its skin symbolising the deceased’s blanket. Besides, all grand-families of the deceased are expected to present with goats or chicken ‘zvipfuyo zvekuchema’ per respective families to symbolize acknowledgement of their wrongs so that they may be forgiven and as presents to celebrate the life of the deceased.

In the Zezuru culture, until burial, the deceased is addressed as if he/she is alive. Whatever programme is designed by the family elders; the dead body is also briefed by an elder who may be crouching and clapping hands in a respectful manner. Some of the most familiar expressions used by the elders to the corpse include, ‘fambai zvakanaka’, ‘zororai murugare’ and others. According to Sitshebo (2000), finally when the grave is being filled with earth, the family says out statements to the effect that if the death was not natural, then the dead has to fight against the killers ‘munhu anozvirwira’.
Conflicts following Death
When people are faced with death, they usually face responsibilities and decisions that comprise a wide range of selections stretching from simple to exceedingly intricate. Some may include choices between getting married soon afterwards or waiting for the appeasement rituals a year later; distributing estate as per the deceased’s will or getting everything; abandoning children or focusing on their growth; what might have caused the death or moving on; who might have killed the deceased or what might have been the reason for the murder and how to fend for the children thereafter and several other choices. Some members of the family are grappled with the question as to how they move forward following the death of one member of the family.

The absence of either a father or mother from the family creates a whole range of challenges for the family especially the children; tensions, family break-ups, motivation and disciplinary problems which have downstream effects socially, psychologically and emotionally (Dobson, 2002). According to Barker and Ricardo (2005), most children whose fathers are gone find themselves involved in activities that safeguard their interests and safety in society as a means to gain power and order. Some children end up taking drugs, venturing into criminal activities while others simply roam in the streets idly.

Following the death of a father in the family, often, there is systematic ill-treatment of children and women by other elderly members of the family. This may arise from the fact that either the woman might have rejected love proposals by other men in the family or that some people may be interested in the estate left behind by the deceased. There are also cases where some members of a family begin to conflict over the distribution of the deceased’s estate including the spouse. This issue about the spouse marks the official start of inheritance of all the other valuables.

In other instances, there may be serious feuds within the family over the possible cause of the deceased’s death. Often times, people consult different sources of information and obviously get different names of alleged killers. Unless and until the family agrees on the medically proven cause of death, there will continue to differences and hostilities within the family.

Death According to the Zezuru People
According to the Zezuru culture, death means many things; complete demise of an individual (kuparara), departing to a spiritual realm where ancestors live (kuparadzana kuenda kuNyiika-dzimu), and a phenomenon that is hard to comprehend and explain (matambudziko). Further, death could be classified
according to the cause; influenced/triggered death (rufu rwakonzereswa nemumwe), death as a result of God’s time (rufu rwekukwana kwenguva yaMwari) and suicide or personal mischief (rufu rwekuzviurayisa).

According to the Zezuru culture, though all are deaths and requiring funerals, the three deaths are received differently by society owing to the cause of the deaths. The triggered death attracts a lot of sympathy as people believe that had the deceased not been killed, maybe he/she would have done things differently in life. People also believe that the deceased would not have had enough time to plan for the living and the family left behind. Therefore, mourners genuinely cry and follow all the burial rites including delivering genuine grave-side speeches. In such deaths, families consult traditional spirit mediums ‘masvikiro’ to establish the cause of death with a view to know why he/she might have been killed ‘gata’. Regarding death as a result of God’s time, it is believed that no-one would have disputed God’s plans and therefore, mourners are relatively emotional in the manner in which they view death. In such a death, consultations ‘gata’ are conducted to establish the cause of death though it will be known that God would have delivered his judgment as the person would be either too old to live or too ill to survive. In the latter form of suicidal death, people believe that this might have been influenced by evil spirits ‘mhepo dzakaipa’ while others feel that the deceased would have brought unnecessary costs on their lives given that the cause of death may be out of negligence. There may be some mourners who may be touched by the fact that the deceased could have sought third party intervention than to seek death or commit suicide. Society’s anger and disapproval is shown by the general practice that forbids body viewing in case of a death due to suicide. In the event that traditional consultations are conducted ‘gata’ people will be seeking to know the nature of the evil spirits that might have affected the deceased.

Death viewed from a Christian perspective meant the promotion from the worldly life to a wonderful angelic living where there was no agony and sorrow but joy. The terms that are used in the Zezuru culture to define death, to some extent depict the type of death that one would have experienced and the kind of funeral that goes with a particular death. The terms ‘kufa’ and ‘rufu’, are general words for any type of death while ‘nhamo’ (challenges), shows the challenges associated with a particular death and its funeral. In most cases, when death is defined as ‘nhamo’, it will be characterized by poverty and inadequacy of resources and also defines the status of the deceased in that society. The term ‘kutisiya’ (departing) means that the deceased would have left the rest of the family while they did not expect. This type of death may not necessarily tell the status of the deceased in society. ‘Kutungamira (lead the journey), is another type of death which tells us that the deceased would have left too prematurely than expected. It may also mean
that the person has died ahead of more deserving on account of their illness or old age. The definition of ‘kuparara’ (demise) means that a person would have died while he/she had other pending programmes in society. In other words, a person’s life would have been ended prematurely by some unexplained or mysterious cause. Meanwhile, ‘kuzorora’ (rest) defines a form of death where a person who would have suffered out of severe illness or old age finally succumbs to death. The Zezuru feel that God would have intervened in the suffering of a person by taking away life.

In the Zezuru culture, there is also what is termed ‘chisahwira’ (friend’s caricature of the dead) (to be discussed later in the book). This is a common practice either by a friend or some close nephew/niece whereby one will be dramatizing the life of the deceased. The dramatization depicts the kind of life, the conduct, the way one walked, behaved and talked so much so that it appears as if the deceased has resurrected from the dead. Through such dramatization, people can express their feelings about the dead and how he/she would have died. People are also able to express how they perceive death; that it can be celebrated despite being engulfed by sorrow and grief.

**Song and Death**

Song and dance have traditionally played a significant role in African culture. Songs are used in various situations including child naming ceremonies, initiation, agricultural, war ceremonies, religious ceremonies and ceremonies for the dead including funeral wakes (Hassan, 2012). Songs communicate with emotions. Song and sometimes accompanied by dance, hand-clapping and drums help to console the bereaved families and attend to emotional needs of the affected parties.

Some of the songs which are common in the Zezuru culture and which deliver an important message include; ‘ndimi makauraya hazvina mhosva paukama’ (you killed, anyway, we are related). This song simply means that a particular individual or family is known to have killed the deceased and that the affected family holds no grudge as they are related. Song ‘tipeiwo nguva yekuchema gamba redu’ (give us time to mourn our hero) pleads for peace and time to mourn one of the family deceased who would have played a vital role in the family. Another song ‘tambirai mwana uyo’ (God, may you accept your child who has come) simply pleads with either God or the spirits to accept one of theirs who has passed on. All the songs relay a particular message either to the parties accused of the deaths, God or the affected families.
Mode of Conflict Resolution

It was also established that while death brought about sorrow and grief in the family and community, there were instances when some sections of the society felt relieved by the passing on of an individual. In the Zezuru culture ‘chivanhu’ it was unheard of that people celebrated the death of a person no matter how bad he/she would have been. However, there were common statements that were used by elders like ‘afa anaka’ implying that every dead person immediately became a valuable person in society no matter how evil he/she might have been. In society, there are some individuals who live cruel and evil lives against others so much so that some sections of the society wish them dead. These wishes may not be said or expressed in public but in isolated circles, some people express it.

There are also some people and leaders who are generally tough in whatever they do especially in decision-making. According to the data obtained, some of their decisions disadvantage other sections of the society. In some cases, the same individuals are adamant that they do not change their perceptions and thinking. It is then that others wish those tough leaders dead to experience change. In other cases, compromises may be hard to come by simply because one of the negotiators is adamant and unprepared to move for the better. The death of that adamant leader finally opens opportunities for compromise and way-forward. An interesting scenario was presented as follows;

‘Two feuding families (Moyo and Pito) over a dead woman (Jane) from Pito family, co-habitating with a man (John) in Rusape. The two families fail to reach an agreement for 2 months as to when the deceased may be buried as the senior uncle demands 50 beasts as compensation while the other uncle is prepared to take 20 beasts and allow burial. Accidentally, the senior uncle crushes into a stationary vehicle in Marondera and dies instantly. After his burial in Wedza, the Moyo family seeks to resume talks over the burial of Jane. Coincidentally, the junior uncle is now in charge of the talks and immediately compromises allowing the burial of Jane. In his justification for accepting only 20 beasts, he argues that Jane’s spirit needed some rest and not continued storage in a mortuary in Rusape. Therefore, his decision was for the good of Jane. On the other side, the Moyo family believes that the death of the senior uncle helped resolve the stalemate’.

It was also argued that there are some conflicts which are attitude-based and are influenced by one’s hatred for a particular personality in the opposing camp. Once that personality is removed, it may be realized that the conflict ceases to exist. Therefore, some deaths may serve as solutions to some conflicts which may be fueled by inter-personality attitudes.
There are other personalities in society who appear tough and uncompromising. This attitude may be a result of some past experiences with a particular issue that one may not be ready to give in or simply accept some concessions. However, when a particular personality dies, that unfortunate incident impresses the uncompromising personality that he/she would like to show happiness by quickly changing positions and giving in on previously denied matters. In this case, it means that the other part has softened its position simply because someone has passed on. While this may be ‘un-Zezuru’, it would have resolved a conflict in society.

It was given out that the concept of ‘chisahwira’ has proved to be an effective mode of communication within the Zezuru culture in that grieving families are able to air out their views and still express their memories about the deceased. It is thought that as parties dramatise the life of the deceased, they will be normalizing strained relationships within and between families. If ever there were grievances amongst the people relating to the deceased, friends dramatizing the deceased try to quell and normalize relations and in some way answer what might have been raised through speeches. This is an effective way of resolving social conflicts in society.

There are some deaths of prominent personalities which are characterized by a lot of activities and large attendances. Such deaths and funerals see different people attending and seeking to participate as a way of bidding farewell to the deceased. It is during such deaths and funerals where people with serious differences have no option but to attend and interact in such a way that they end up resolving their differences willingly or otherwise. In other words, some deaths bring warring parties together and even ‘force’ them to see things in the same fashion. It was also established that in other situations, hostile parties or individuals meet during the funeral or grave-digging where people will be interacting and conversing jokingly. Some of the people aware of the hostilities may introduce the issue to the discussion allowing people to talk the differences over in a very light and tolerant manner.

Sitting a grave is an important process with a lot of significance in the Zezuru culture. Sites where graves are located depend on the status and role of the deceased in that society. If the deceased was a poor and ordinary person, in the majority of cases, the grave is located in an ordinary cheap and public cemetery whereas, if the deceased was a rich, well-up and prominent personality in society, the grave is likely to be in an up-market and secluded cemetery. However, in the rural Zezuru culture, there are some people who are buried on secluded sites on account of their morally bad behaviours during their lives. However, there are instances when a deceased is buried in a cemetery where family rivals might have some interests or
have one of theirs laid there. It therefore implies that whenever the two rival parties visit their graves for whatever reason, they meet and in some cases forced to interact and share some moments.

The ability by the family to fulfill all the required traditional rituals and enabling the deceased to become an ancestor is an achievement and a success to both the living and the dead. This is so in that it solves some of the conflicts that are believed to exist in the spiritual worlds where one is not accepted and may finally become a ghost and a violent one for that matter and a danger to the living. That is a conflict on the part of the dead.

There are some people who plan for their deaths so much so that they get to an extent of writing wills in which they distribute their estate (Eyetsemitan, 2002). There are also cases where some people do not even prepare for their death and live each day as it comes. In such situations, there are some people especially some of the children of the principal person owning property, who begin to demand their shares of inheritance. Others actually begin to fight over share allotment thereby straining relations up to the extended family levels. Some of the conflicts and hostilities may be ended following the death of the estate owner as the squabbling parties eventually access their desired shares. The death of the estate owner also comes as a relief to the surviving family that would have been tormented over inheritance. Actually, the death of the estate owner may be considered the ultimate solution to the conflict as the family will finally be given the right to their inheritance.

It is also argued that ‘mombe yenheedzo’ and the other gifts of goats and chicken help to quell any of the conflicts that might have existed between some of the living and the deceased during his life. The attendance to the conflicts on the burial day is also believed to address the possibility of experiencing ghosts and other bad omens by the living allegedly at the instigation of the dead. Similarly, the concept of ‘kuzvirwira’ alluded to by Sitshebo (2000) implies that the dead also play a role in as far as settling their grievances and scores is concerned. It therefore means that in the Zezuru culture, problems and challenges noted by the dead may not be addressed by the living but effectively and efficiently by the dead themselves against the living.

However, this approach to conflict resolution was argued to have its weaknesses and de-merits. While it has been noted that the approach can indeed lead to resolutions, it has also been realized that any death the world-over and in particular within the Zezuru communities creates problems. Traditionally, it is believed that no-one is able to fill the gap left following the death of another, ‘hakuna anozadzikisa vende
rasiiwa nemumwe’. It is also always thought that every individual in society has his/her role to play. Therefore, the death of a person naturally creates problems around the area where that personality played an important role; spousal role, fatherly, motherly role, leadership, neighbour, friend and sister’s role amongst others.

The death of some people is also believed to lead to some challenges in society. It is argued that the death of an understanding member of a negotiating team may mean that the talks become difficult to maneuver. It is argued that there are some individuals in society who are so valuable that their absence may mean challenges and retarded development.

Summary
Talk about death in most African communities and within the Zezuru society in particular is taboo and taken to mean that you are inviting death in the family. However, when it finally comes on its volition, there are various situations that are experienced by different members of the family. To some, death comes with social, economic and psychological challenges whilst to some, it brings solutions to long-standing conflicts in society. It has been noted in the chapter that while it is 'un-Zezuru' to wish death, it some instances, it has solved some of the challenges facing some societies and individuals in particular.

References


Chapter Four

Appeasement of the Dead ‘Kurova Guva’

‘There are also conflicts that exist between the dead and the living commonly emanating from the living’s failure to fulfil the expectations of the dead’.

Introduction

The Shona people have for a long time believed in endogenous traditional methods as part of social monitoring instruments. This has been confirmed by different researchers; Tatira (2000), Pfukwa (2001), Masaka and Chemhuru (2012) Dodo et al (2012), and Chiwara et al, (2013) who all agree that ancestral spirits, taboos, traditional leadership, customs and cultural values have jointly upheld and fostered peace, development and harmony. The Zezuru people have also engaged numerous effective methods in attending to diverse conflict situations; the elders (tete/sekuru), unhu/ubuntu, taboos (zviera), the court system (dare), compensation (kuripa), silence (kunyarara) and retaliation (kutsiva) (Dodo et al, 2012). The Zezuru people have also preserved urban/rural visits which are traditionally meant to celebrate important traditional rites and cultural events like title-taking (kugadzwa zita remusha), marriage ceremonies (kuroorwa), memorial ceremonies (manyaradzo), appeasement of the dead (kurova makuva), initiation (kuchekwa), spiritual dance ceremonies (bira) and enthronement of village bulls (kudira mombe dzemusha) amongst others. To some extent, these rituals resolved conflicts that may have developed in the families over a period. This chapter discusses ‘appeasement of the dead’ process as a conflict resolution mechanism within the Zezuru people of Chikomba communal area, Zimbabwe. To the north, Chikomba borders with Chiota, to the east with Wedza and Buhera, to the west with Mhondoro and Gutu and Buhera to the south.

A conflict is experienced when different parties fail to compromise on an issue or ideology. These parties could be people within the same community or between the living and the dead and could be conflicting over issues to do with traditional policies, rites or material resources. The moment that these parties agree to differ, a serious conflict may erupt till probably when some mechanism to resolve is initiated. In this case, the Zezuru people employ the appeasement of the dead method to attend to some of the conflicts.
Background
Traditionally in rural communities, there are some conflicts that are experienced over a variety of issues; land boundaries, water wells, pastures, vegetable gardens, village paths, kraal sites, burial sites, respect for each other’s totems and several others. Besides, there are some communities that do not generally interact for various reasons, chief amongst them being the fact that they would never have had an opportunity to interact. There are also conflicts that exist between the dead and the living commonly emanating from the living’s failure to fulfil the expectations of the dead, desecrating the grave rituals and violating some rules around death taboos; bringing the dead back, surviving spouse engaging in sex before appeasement rituals, marrying off an off-spring of the deceased before the rituals or conducting any other family ritual before the appeasement ritual as the family will be considered ‘still mourning’ ‘musha mutema’ amongst others.

In the event that the living people either violate any of the rules concerning the dead or fail to meet the requirements set by the dead, the eventuality is that the living people encounter severe calamities, which in some cases can result in the death of some members of the family. In other cases, family members simply experience serious and unending misfortunes like; girls failing to get married, married members failing to conceive, men failing to secure employment, married members encountering marriage problems and at times conceiving children with some challenges of various nature. It has been observed that whenever such eventualities are being experienced, family members begin to fight and hate each other over who might have caused misfortunes in the family. People start pointing fingers at each other while others begin to consult traditional healers ‘n’anga’, traditional spirit mediums ‘masvikiro’ and other religious mediums ‘maporofita’ in an effort to establish the cause and possibly get cleansed. It is therefore the scope of this discussion to look at how ‘kurova guva’ can resolve some of the traditional conflicts. It must also be realised that approaches in some of these rituals may differ within the Zezuru ethnic group depending on the region on which a particular community is located. The difference is to some extent influenced by contamination from nearby and neighbouring cultures, level of civilisation and level of adaptability.

Culture
Culture is what generally defines a people; the activities and ways of life that a particular community is known for. It represents peoples’ beliefs, worldview, gender, marriage, behaviour systems, skills, and institutions, social customs, music, traditional dress, family, lifestyles, and dance amongst others (Falola,
The definition of culture varies with the level of civilization and social status. However, it identifies shared beliefs and artifacts in a community.

**Traditional Brew**
The brew is associated with most of traditional rituals which are conducted in Zimbabwe like marriage, birth, and bull enthronement. However, this type of beer differs from one region to the other depending on the culture of a particular people. Beer brewing basically involves malting, drying, milling, souring, boiling, mashing and alcoholic fermentation (Haggblade et al., 2004)

**Traditional Appeasement of the Dead**
Appeasement of the dead, bringing home or re-calling the spirit back into the village ‘*Kurova guva, kutamba guva, kuchenura munhu or magadziro*’ is a traditional ritual which is performed in honour and remembrance of the dead by the living. Gundani (1994) calls it ritual integration of the deceased's spirit. It is a ceremony which is performed once and usually a year after the death of a person or after a rain season in the year after death. The relevance of the rain season is to ensure that all the earth on the grave has been compressed. The other belief is that the deceased’s soul would have rested following some rains. Traditionally, water resembles life and stability and therefore, the deceased is considered to have settled in the spiritual world ‘*nyika-dzimu*’ and interacting with those long gone called ancestors ‘*midzimu*’. The ceremony is primarily held to recall the spirit of the dead back into the village and be part of the rest of the living relatives (Bourdillon, 1976). This demonstrates the close relationship which exists between the living and the deceased in Shona culture. According to Shona culture, it is believed that the spirit of the dead roams about until the living relatives welcome back his/her spirit. Failure to welcome back ritually, the spirit of the deceased is believed to irritate and worry other spirits and in turn influence serious individual or family calamity (Fontein, 2009).

**Preparation of Traditional Brew**
According to the explanations established on the ground, when traditional brew is prepared, there is some clearly set procedure to follow. The brewing process starts with the malting of ‘*rapoko*’ to create an element called ‘*masvusvu*’. ‘*Rapoko*’ is drenched in water for some days at room temperature to allow malting. Malting is the germination of cereal grain in humid air in controlled conditions, the main objective being to stimulate the growth of hydrolytic enzymes, which are not existent in the un-germinated grain. After the entire grain has germinated, it is taken out, sun-dried for 3 days and grounded.
into a flour form. The soaking of grain in water initiates germination such that adaptation of the endosperm formation will progress.

First of all, a maize meal porridge-like substance is prepared on the first day. It is stored in clay pots called ‘gate’ under room temperature. On the second day, the porridge substance is boiled at high temperature before ‘rapoko’ flour is added and boiled again till a good mixture is formulated. The porridge-like mixture is stored in clay pots for at a day to allow the growth of some form. On the fourth day, the mixture is again boiled before ‘mhanga’ is produced leaving wort. ‘Mhanga’ is some form of a traditional drink which is extracted from the beer mixture. Wort is boiled to bring about the denaturation of malt enzymes before more rapoko is added to produce ‘bitti’. ‘Bitti’ is also another form of a traditional drink which is thicker that the beer itself but non-alcoholic. To drink this ‘bitti’, some sugar is added for a tastier drink.

Wort is stored for three more days under room temperature before filtration is achieved by simple decantation using a sack or some other clothing material which allows beer to pass through. All the processed beer is also stored in the ‘gate’ for 3 days to allow fermentation process. Fermentation allows yeast to transform the sugars in the wort into ethyl alcohol which is the desired product. The quality of beer is determined by the following; amount of ‘rapoko’ flour added the extent to which ‘rapoko’ grain would have germinated, the amount of fire during the mixture of maize meal porridge and ‘rapoko’ flour and how thorough decantation is conducted.

**Appeasement of the Dead**

According to the Zezuru elders and what was observed during the two rituals conducted in the selected villages, when a person dies, a year later, the family prepares for the ceremony to recall the spirit of the dead back into the family. The two families; where the father hails from and where the mother comes from, consult each other on the possibility to perform the ceremony before they go on what is called ‘gata’. ‘Gata’ is simply a process of consulting traditional healers on the state of the deceased’s opinion and whether the grave has not been desecrated by the living. In other words, the family will be looking for the following; what might have caused the death, was the deceased happy when he/she passed on, does he/she hold any grudge against any of the living, was he/she accepted well wherever he/she might be, and is he/she prepared to come back into the village and live amongst the living and has the surviving spouse not engaged in immoral activities like unsanctioned sex? It is believed that if the rituals are not
performed, the spirit of the dead roams around till it turns into a ghost and starts persecuting the living as a protest measure. Ghosts are usually a result of either poor rituals or non-performance of the rituals.

After the consultations have been done, the village starts hosting spiritual dance ceremonies commonly called ‘pfonda or jiti’ at least a month before the scheduled date of the appeasement ritual. About 10 days before the ceremony day, the two families led by the elderly women from the mothers side, embark on traditional beer brewing so that its completion coincides with the celebration day. It must be realized that during the funeral of the deceased, close family members led by an elderly nephew ‘muzukuru’ collect some soil from the grave and add some traditional medicine ‘muti’ before they store in a closed room. Actually, the concoction is sealed in a small clay pot called ‘pfuko’ for safe keeping. On the appeasement day, celebrations start in the afternoon with people preparing for an all-night vigil singing and playing ‘mbira’ and drums. However, in the morning, a few elders led by a nephew store some beer, about 3-5 litres in a small clay pot which is then sealed and stored next to a concoction pot. The ceremony is strictly led by mature elderly people who are familiar with the process.

Just before midnight, the two sealed pots are withdrawn and taken into the hut where celebrations will be on-going. At this juncture, everyone is asked to take off shoes, hats and any other jewellery including wrist watches. The eldest nephew kneels next to the potsherd (rukiva) where he starts to converse with the ancestors asking them to help return of the deceased back into the family so that he/she could look after the surviving members and children. It must be realized that appeasement of the dead is conducted for people who would have been either married or grown up to be adults. The nephew also asks the deceased to safely and happily return to the family. All this conversation will be running parallel to a light hand-clapping. On completion, the rest of the attendees clap hands while women ululate as a way of confirming their reception of the dead back into the family. The nephew hands over the beer pot to an elderly member regarded as a father or uncle to the deceased who then goes out with the pot. He then goes round the hut in an anti-clockwise direction saying out statements to the effect that the deceased should accept the invitation and the beer presented to him/her. The pot is taken back into the hut.

The two pots are then opened and almost half of the beer in the pot is shared amongst all the people in the hut. The remaining beer in the small pot is reserved for another process at the grave side. Meanwhile, more beer is availed from the other bigger pots stored in other rooms. Following the provision of more beer, attendees are more motivated to sing, dance and play ‘mbira’ till the following morning when the entire village goes to the grave side for more rituals.
During the early hours of that morning, the participants led by the elderly nephew go to the grave side alongside the beer pot that would have reserved the previous night and the ‘muti’ pot. As they walk, they will be singing, dancing and playing ‘mbira’. ‘Mbira’ is believed to be the official entertainment for the spirits. On arrival, everyone takes off shoes, hats and any other jewellery including watches and kneel down before the nephew converses with the spirits kneeling. The nephew presents the ‘muti’ pot and beer pot to the deceased and pours all the beer on the grave. He goes on to empty all the contents in a ‘muti’ pot on the grave before he takes some soil from the same grave. There is ululation and joy and people walk back to the village where they are served with breakfast. Meanwhile, as everyone is having breakfast, the inner clique of the family will be sprinkling the soil from the grave on the entire family yard as a sign that the spirit has returned to the family. This is followed by the presentation of a beast to the spirits before it is slaughtered for the celebrations. Once this has been done, the family is believed to have been cleansed ‘kuchenura’ and received another member of the family.

After the main meal around mid-day, the nephew announces the commencement of the inheritance programme ‘kugara nhaka’ where the deceased’s spouse is expected to find a replacement from the living members while the rest of the property is distributed to other members of the family. However, with the advent of the disease HIV and Aids, most spouses are no-longer interested in the inheritance partner; rather, they select one of their children or an aunt to stand in for the deceased partner. On the property side, given the level of modernity and the present inheritance laws, property is now left for the surviving spouse and the children so that they do not suffer and start acquiring new property. Following a successful ritual, the surviving spouse is considered freed from the deceased’s marriage ‘kuchenura’ so much so that he/she is free to move on with her live and possibly find another partner. Similarly, the village or family is now free to conduct other rituals without violating death taboos.

**Conflict Resolution Means**
The ceremony of bringing back the deceased into the family has served other purposes other than merely appeasing the dead. It has been noted that conflicts have also been addressed through this approach. The fact that different people of varied totems have been mobilized for this ritual means that there is more dialogue which eventually results in bringing different people and families together (Dodo et al, 2012). This is further cemented by the fact that participants will be sharing food, beer and other facilities like benches, drums, ‘mbira’ and fireplaces. In some cases, people or communities that would have experienced severed relations for a long time end up interacting and probably befriending gain.
There are people who meet at such gatherings and eventually marry. Such gatherings showcase other people’s talents like drum-beating, ‘mbira’ playing, and dancing, singing and even cooking such that other people end up admiring. It is this admiration which catches potential suitors’ attention so much so that getting into a relationship becomes easy. Once people are married, it means that two or more families would have been brought together thus sealing all opportunities for potential inter-family or inter-village conflicts. Traditionally in-laws ‘vakuwasha vanoremedza madzitezvara, madzitezvara vachikudza vakuwasha’ have high respect for each other so much so that they rarely conflict.

Within the Zezuru culture, conducting rituals like appeasement of the dead, title-taking and bull-enthronement is expected to resolve some of the conflicts that might exist between the living and the dead. Most of the misfortunes and calamities befalling some families are believed to end as soon as such rituals are successfully conducted. The challenge with some of these traditional rites is that there is no scientific methodology to prove that misfortunes are being caused by what and that they have been resolved following the performance of some rituals. However, as soon as family members start securing jobs, getting married and enjoying their marriages, conceiving and experiencing growth materially and socially, social and other forms of family conflicts begin to die. There is a general belief that failure to conduct some of these traditional rituals leads to some challenges and that as soon as the rituals are conducted; all the problems cease to exist.

Some sections of the society believe that it is some form of conflict when a spouse of the dead lives alone and is not allowed to find sexual gratification contrary to the dictates of nature. Therefore, the conduct of the ritual which frees him/her from some of the sacred taboos is a great relief to both the widow/widower and the potential suitors who would have waited for the rituals before accessing the suitor. The conflict within the widow/widower’s feelings/heart over the need for love and company is addressed with the performance of the rituals.

Within the Zezuru people, a nephew is an important person in as far as conflict resolution is concerned. A nephew facilitates communication and interaction amongst family members and between the family and its ancestors. It is believed that a nephew is not affected by any of the repercussions that may befall the family in the event of a violation of taboos. Besides, a nephew is considered friendly to the elders in a family so much so that he can say out whatever he wants freely ‘chisahwira’ without any reprimand.
Traditionally, it is believed that whenever an ancestral spirit is pleased by the conduct of the living people, several others also follow suit. This is against the belief that in the spiritual realm, all spirits share wisdom and help each other in the event that there is need to help or reward a living being. This is supported by the argument that if one wrongs another for no reason, the ancestors of the wronged person can avenge in liaison with the ancestors of the wrongdoer. Therefore, performing rituals for a dead person by one family brings together several other ancestral spirits.

However, the same rituals may also cause various conflicts in society. There are instances when a family goes out for consultation on the possible causes of one’s death and end up divided after one of theirs would have been accused of the death. Whether that will be true or not, there will be hatred and divisions in the family. Therefore, it is important to engage into such traditional processes fully aware of the possible implications given the fact that traditional rituals have no scientific means of proving the authenticity of a scenario.

Traditional appeasement of the dead process can also disadvantage the surviving spouse in the event that there is a potential suitor and yet the rituals are yet to be conducted. The spouse will be expected to wait even if there is a problem within the family which may delay the process for some years. In the event that the spouse decides to move on, some members of the family may end up accusing her/him of infidelity or impatience and failing to honour traditional customs. The belief in traditional rituals may also retard development within some families as they will not be adjusting to social dynamism. Some people have remained stagnant and attached to some archaic systems and beliefs at the expense of personal growth scientifically and ideologically.

**Summary**

Some traditional rituals have been noted to be an effective mechanism for conflict resolution in most societies so much so that they have been preserved while others have just disappeared naturally. Appeasement of the dead is one such ritual which has sustained peace and harmony in societies while traditional inheritance of the spouse is also one ritual which has become unpopular and is dying gradually. While the level of appreciation of the role and importance of rituals differ in communities, some communities have simply religiously adhered to the dictates so much so that peace and order have been experienced at the instigation of traditional policing measures. Though appeasement of the dead rituals have been observed to be gradually going into extinction, it is one of the few rituals that had survived early and premature death and which has managed to keep families intact and in communication through
its ceremonies where people come together. Overall, the ritual has proved to be a handy conflict resolution apparatus in most societies within the Zezuru communities in Chikomba and something which some societies cannot do without.

References


Chapter Five

‘Chisahwira’ and Conflict Resolution

‘Individuals involved in this are not expected to show anger or intolerance during the time they interact’.

Introduction

Conflicts have been experienced in most societies, Zezuru people included. During all these times and experiences, people have had to devise means and mechanisms of getting round the conflicts and disputes via some well-established endogenous methods. Before the advent of whites’ designed conflict and dispute resolution systems, Africans and the Zezuru people in particular had their culturally embedded approaches which never failed them socially, politically and economically. Amongst some of the several methods were; marriage, negotiation, sanctions, appeasement, compensation, and ‘chisahwira’. ‘Chisahwira’ is an endogenous conflict and dispute resolution mechanism which has been in use at various forums especially at funeral wakes, marriages, village disputes and other formal gatherings where way-ward individuals in society are either reprimanded or reminded of their unbecoming behaviour by some personalities who are considered either as comic or witty. This chapter looks at how the Zezuru people in Chikomba district, Mashonaland East province use the ‘chisahwira’ approach to resolve some of their conflicts and disputes in society.

This chapter was motivated by the need to understand society as it relates to various conflicts and a variety of resolution measures. As pointed out by Herman and Reynolds (1994) making reference to the works of George Herbert Mead (1863–1931), Symbolic Interactionism sees individuals as participative in modeling their world, rather than as objects who are acted upon by society. It is in this regard that the study sought to explore the role that some sections of the society do play in moderating life in general from the minutest level of the community.

Background

Ever since time immemorial, the Shona people inclusive of the Zezuru have live in peace and harmony courtesy of some conflict resolution mechanisms that existed within the communities. These mechanisms did not require any input from the colonially-brought alien systems which are argued as lacking an element of ‘unhu/ubuntu’, rationale and morality. While several mechanisms and rituals are on the ground
and serving an important purpose, it is the concept of ‘chisahwira’ which this chapter focuses with a view to establish its role in as far as conflict resolution is concerned. ‘Sahwira’ personalities have always been considered as a social nuisance without closely looking at several other roles that they play in society.

‘Chisahwira’ is a traditional concept associated with close friendship and characterized by openness, friendliness, caring, togetherness, harmony, empathy, and helping each other. It is associated with close individuals and families that share a variety of traits and secrets. The concept is also characterized by individuals who share jokes and moments directed at resolving social conflicts and seeking social development. Individuals or groups involved in this ‘chisahwira’ are not expected to show anger or intolerance during the time they interact.

‘Sahwira’

‘Sahwira’ is a term that is used in Shona and in particular, Zezuru to define a person holding some kind of friendship between people in society. ‘Sahwira’ (masahwira – plural) is defined differently in Zezuru dialect with Bourdillon (1987) and Mashiri (1999) referring to it as a 'ritual friend'. A ‘sahwira’ is a family’s close friend, who knows the family secrets and usually acts as a right-hand counselor. This is a term that is given to a close friend while the act of being that friend is punctuated by the prefix (chi). In most cases, a ‘sahwira’ is close and has no boundaries in as far as conduct and confidentiality issues are concerned. ‘Sahwira’ is also one person who is used by other members of a particular community to relay sensitive and other important messages to an individual in the event that other members are too shy or reserved to deliver a message or advice.

In Shona, a ‘sahwira’ normally uses third person noun prefixes to describe relationships. The most common third person noun prefixes that are used in Shona are, according to Mashiri (1999), classes 7 (chi-), 8 (zvi-, plur), 11 (rwu-), 12 (ka-), 13 (twu-) and 21 (zi-), which are secondary interpretative prefixes carrying implications of irony, criticism and exaggeration. In Shona these are commonly called ‘zivivakashure’. These prefixes are common in safe and jocular delivery of sensitive messages to an intended target population in that people will just laugh it off as a simple joke and yet laden with ‘other’ intentions.

Concept of a Friend

A friend is an individual who is close to another in most situations and care for the other. According to Holmes and Greco (2011), friendship is liberally selected but normally not romantically focused. There
are various types of friends in life and they are determined by different circumstances under which people either go through or individuals meet. Some individuals make friends in times of problems while others are motivated by happiness and joy. Others meet in conflict while others are brought together through criminal acts. Rath (2006) identified 8 types of friendships in society and which also serve different roles; builders (cheerleaders), champions (who defend you), collaborators (like interests), companion (one you call first) and connectors (who link you), energizers (who lift when you are down), mind-openers (knowledge givers) and navigators (guidance givers)

The concept of friendship is an ever-mutating, social individual experience across time and culture. Friendships start early in life and extent all of human development and Roisman et al.(2004) argue that the capacity to establish and retain associates in juvenile and youth has been tied to success in early adulthood. Noting the importance of friendships and company, a research by Fiori (2011) established that adults with strong community networks of either family or friends experienced lesser levels of despair and greater levels of intellect over time and displayed higher levels of confidence in being able to ask for assistance. Holmes and Greco (2011) argue that friendship networks have an effect on a person’s fitness, happiness and material success.

In friendship, there are a variety of services and benefits that parties either do enjoy or render. Some of the basic services and support have been identified by Taylor (2007) who describes three forms as: informational (information and advice), instrumental (material resources), and emotional (love and care). Most of the need for a friend is about taking care as raised by Taylor. Basically, all the scholars are directing their arguments to the fact that friends are there for each other and never expect compensation or reward for any service that they render to each other.

Conflict Resolution
According to Yevyukova (1993), John Burton differentiates between dispute settlement and conflict resolution revealing that whereas a dispute revolves around incompatible, but negotiable interests, conflict occurs over non-negotiable matters of basic human necessities’ denial. Conflict is rampant in human society, amongst personalities and groups, and it is essential to manage it. It has been experienced in all cultures, religions, and societies ever since humans have walked the earth. Because conflicts are an essential part of human interaction, one must adjust to manage them in a way that avoids intensification and damage, and come up with inventive and imaginative concepts to resolve them. To achieve peace and understanding in some of the conflicts, it requires working collectively as combined problem solvers.
pursuing cooperative resolutions. This then calls for the assistance of a neutral third party who acts as go-between to assist the parties’ compromise, and reach a common resolution to the conflict. A third party should ensure the outcome of an agreement that is realistic, operational, clear, specific, and understood by all parties.

The outcome of negotiations or any other method applied depends on respective cultures. Culture is a very intricate factor, which sways people’s view of the world, their principles, actions, choices, and the consequences of the process. Many aspects impact negotiations: body signs, social and shared obligation, style, space, signs, time, language, and the custom of the social system. Culture also has a bearing on some of the conflict resolution approaches. In Chikomba district, there are some old and culturally inclined approaches which have been in use by long-gone forefathers and which are still relevant in this day and age.

In Chikomba district, some of the conflicts and disputes that have been experienced have been influenced by a variety of factors; unequal distribution of resources, social inequality, land issues, cattle rustling, perception issues amongst people of different totems and failure to harmonise agricultural seasons with regards to the control of livestock movement (kusairira mombe kumafuro). Whilst these may be some of the most prominent conflicts recorded, at minutest level in society, the following are experienced almost on a daily basis; disputes over gossiped issues, perceived pride by other members of the society, failure to control one’s livestock from trespassing into others’ boundaries and failure to pay back debts. Some of the conflicts and disputes that go out of hand end up getting referred either to the local chief or Police either for mediation or prosecution. However, most of the cases, whether referred to any authority or not, have to some extent, be addressed by a ‘sahwira’ through some way; during a funeral, a public gathering or at a water well. All a ‘sahwira’ needs is a forum to air out his/her mind regardless of whether that hurts the victim or not.

**Zezuru’s Conception of ‘Sahwira’**

This concept is understood differently in the Zezuru community. Different communities have various types of ‘sahwira’ (madzisahwira – plural) as follows; friends with benefits, brothers from another mother, best friends, secret keepers and keepers of families, African friendship, social companionship, friend in deed, family ally and joking relationship amongst others. Other communities describe ‘chisahwira’ as family mentorship. All these definitions were derived from the fact that a ‘sahwira’ is someone who is very close to another’s family or individual. One must be privy to another’s private life,
personal problems and in some cases has access to family challenges so much so that he/she can intervene without invitation and suggest some possible solutions. The two friends actually share some relationship as posited by (Holmes and Greco, 2011). A ‘sahwira’ is more than a friend in that he/she performs other responsibilities that are beyond the purview of an ordinary friend. Some elderly members of the Zezuru community argue that a ‘sahwira’ is either equivalent to a best friend or is just a graduation from a best friend.

In the same societies, others view a ‘sahwira’, as a person who may be mistaken for an immoral person, an insane, and an ignorant and irresponsible person in society given the kind of behaviour that he/she may display in society. Such types of personalities may be described by a variety of terms derived from different noun prefixes. Some people are described as ‘chimunhu’ (person), ‘chimukadzi’ (woman), ‘chikomana’ (small boy), and ‘chirume’ (man) with (Chi-) showing the derogatory nature of the noun. There are also some people who may be described as ‘zvirume’, ‘zvikadzi’ with (zvi) defining the ugliness of the person being referred to while others use such demeaning terms; ‘rwukadzi’ (woman) and ‘rwumai’ (mother). Some individuals could also be identified by the stoutness of their physical looks hence the descriptions like ‘karume’ (small man), ‘kamwana’ (small baby) and ‘kakadzi’ (small woman). In this case, prefix (ka- ) defines the smallness of an individual while (twu) defines the smallness of the same personalities though in large numbers or simply in plural. There is also a noun prefix (zi-) which also shows the bulkiness of a person; ‘zirume’ (big man), ‘zigomana’ (big boy). To some extent, these descriptions fit Mashiri (1999)’s position regarding the use of some noun prefixes’ classes either by ‘sahwira’ to drive a point home in a caricature manner or that other members of the community may apply the same terms to describe the behaviour and characteristics of ‘sahwira’.

A ‘sahwira’ is a person who behaves in a manner which is sometimes questionable. He/she can get food from another by way of grabbing and run away or simply joining at the table without invitation and even get to a point of eating all the food ahead of the owner. Whatever, restrain or reprimand does not serve any purpose to a ‘sahwira’. He/she can confront a person gossiping badly about his/her friend and tell in the face that he/she is aware of whatever information could be circulating in the locality at the influence of a particular individual. This type of a friend is not shy or afraid of possible embarrassment and is even not ashamed of undressing another in public. However, while these personalities were important in society, there were instances where they sparked disputes and hostilities especially where they intervened without getting the right information about an alleged conflict.
Role of a ‘Sahwira’

A ‘sahwira’ as it was given by Rath (2006), has several responsibilities in society. Some of the roles may be considered bad while others are viewed as progressive. According to Mashiri (1999), in Shona culture, the non-reciprocal use of first names or other titles is determined by societal and professional standing, age, relationship and attitudes. A ‘sahwira’ usually plays a role of informing others about a particular individual in society. This is usually so when he/she calls another by either first name or pseudo, usually not known by many in the community. Such secretive names or pseudos are descriptive of one’s old past and misdemeanors. In most cases, the way a ‘sahwira’ addresses a particular individual in society tells one’s position and profession in life. ‘Sahwira’ may also address an individual in a manner that exposes the types of lives and professions one’s children may be involved. In some instances, a ‘sahwira’ may even use obscene language to drive a point home.

During burial ceremonies, a ‘sahwira’ is asked to check on the grave to ensure that no harm has been done to the grave. It is generally believed that a ‘sahwira’ has the guts to say out whatever he/she sees or hears unpleasant. Therefore, this is the best person to inspect the deceased and the grave so that if there is any ill attempted, it may be exposed at once. This is especially important where there have already been cases of mistrust and suspicion in the family.

A ‘sahwira’ and in some cases ‘muroora’ (daughter-in-law) dominate during funerals, with their jokes and caricature antics primarily to turn sad times manageable and lighter. Actually a ‘sahwira’ imitates the behaviours and life of the deceased in a manner that evokes memories and provokes laughter and humour. It is given out that in times of sorrow and grief, laughter and humour are necessary cures to stress, pain, and conflict and also lessen people’s problems, stimulate optimism, and re-connect the grieving with the rest of the community.

Strong friendships and social support systems stand as a cushion in times of hardships. This is supported by Greco and Holmes (2011) who have written widely on friendships, who argue that the component of trust is vital to friendship and that social benefits of friendship include giving and receiving guidance and counsel, care, assistance and affection. A ‘sahwira’ has a key responsibility to lead in some of the family social and cultural functions; marriages, funerals, appeasement of the spirits, rain-making ceremonies and several others. Some of the responsibilities in these ceremonies may include being a director of programmes (mutungamiri), announcer (mushamarari), intermediary between the people and the spirits and a go-between between the bride family and groom’s family in the case of marriage.
The ‘sahwira’ approach has a responsibility to change old habits in society. According to one incident that was witnessed at a social gathering;

“A ‘sahwira’ dramatised how the eldest son lived his life replicating how he staggered and sang in a drunken stupor before he fell to the ground. ‘Sahwira’ demonstrated how the son would stand by the road-side, unzip his trousers and urinate in full view of the passers-by; shout at anyone who dared restraining him. In some cases, he would forget to put back his private part into the trousers or forget to zip-up before he staggered around. ‘Sahwira’ revealed that in most cases, people could not approach the son in that embarrassing posture and would leave him to move around. Besides, ‘sahwira’ indicated that the son verbally assaulted the public especially if they tried to either help or control his immoral behaviour. During this gathering, the eldest son’s in-laws were also present such that he was too embarrassed to allow such behaviour again. The manner in which the ‘sahwira’ dramatised was so mocking and embarrassing that the entire gathering laughed and despised the son for uncontrolled and irresponsible intake of alcohol. The son had to plead with the ‘sahwira’ in private to stop the drama before he was challenged to promise abandoning beer ever again or at least control his behaviour in public”.

The concept of ‘sahwira’ has also helped several people to learn new knowledge in society. There are some people who are so rigid that they cannot change their habits no-matter how much they are exposed to new systems. It is then through the pressure and persuasion by a ‘sahwira’ that some have to some extent shift their mind sets. As the ‘sahwira’ presents some of the jokes in public, they could be taken as learning systems where people could acquire new systems. Besides, some of the ‘sahwiras’ provide advice which may be important in as far as new ideas and discoveries are concerned. It has also been revealed that there are basically two types of ‘sahwiras’ in life; one who is there for you in both trying times and in happiness and the one who simply jokes with you and reprimands when everyone has failed. The difference in the two types of personalities largely lies in that the former is more of a friend whilst the latter is not close but simply has the guts to reprimand and convey sensitive messages in a jocular manner when no-one else can. This discussion established that there are various loose varieties of ‘sahwira’ in society who are derived from the two broad types cited above. One of the types was of one who provided company during beer drinks and other social times while another could be available during funeral wakes and be instrumental in providing entertainment during night vigils. The other type of a ‘sahwira’ could be available during times of plenty and happiness while another could be a close ally in committing or
engaging in immoral activities like engaging in extramarital affairs, conniving to cheat, steal or rob people for personal gain.

There are some people who always provide encouragement for a new individual effort no matter how difficult it may seem in life. Such individuals always motivate to an extent that one ends up believing that no challenge is insurmountable. Such people are part of the traditional Zezuru ‘sahwira’. Such types of ‘sahwira’ were also defined as ‘bururu’ (one who is always close). Such people are sometimes even prepared to take you some miles in an effort to help you achieve your endeavor. They also believe that the achievement of your goal is an achievement of an entire society.

There are some friends or ‘sahwira’ who are good at ensuring that wayward personalities in society are corrected. In this category, there are basically two types of ‘sahwiras’, who can influence the correction of a bad habit; one who teaches kindly and sincerely explaining the benefits and demerits of such bad habits and the other one who corrects mockingly in public and sometimes using satires and parables. These are the types of ‘sahwiras’ who stop gossip in society by openly naming, confronting and shaming people who may be responsible for spreading gossip.

In extreme but rare cases, because of the closeness between friends, upon the death of another, the surviving friend may take over the surviving spouse as a duty to ensure that the widow or widower does not feel lonely and find another love relationship elsewhere. Though this is not encouraged, there are several cases where a ‘sahwira’ could propose love to a surviving spouse taking advantage of the previously existing relationship.

**Methods Used by ‘Sahwira’**

A ‘sahwira’ has a wide range of responsibilities and roles to play in society both good and bad. However, to achieve some of the roles and expectations, there are various means through which these individuals could easily and effectively adopt, all seeking to end some problem or simply resolve a societal conflict. First and foremost, one of the means through which a ‘sahwira’ could drive a point home was through song and dance. There were various situations and forums where people could gather and where a ‘sahwira’ could start singing satirically and dancing provocatively as a way of attracting public attention. The song could be poetic that it delivers a variety of messages but in a diversified manner so much so that it left no-one hurt or disappointed but in laughter. Songs could carry such messages as; ‘*ndimi makauraya, ndimi makauraya, hazvina mhosva!*’ (You are responsible for the death, it does not matter!)
'Sahwira’ could also dance suggestively gyrating the waist and buttocks and accompanied by such song, ‘Murume ndinomugona, wangu ndinomugona, hapana kwaanoenda’ (I can please a man, I can satisfy mine, and he will not leave). The dance and the song simply sent a message of advice to women that you should treat well your partners sexually so that they are always happy and satisfied thus ending some form of conflict.

There are other people who naturally believe in examples and practice to prove what they mean. Such people believe that some of the messages could be best delivered symbolically. In some cases, these people could use signs to drive their points home while in others, they try real practice so much so that when an in-law (maiguru) gets a report that an uncle is weak and inexperienced sexually (kutadza bonde), she gets the uncle by surprise in a secluded area and jokingly get intimate (chiramu). During the process, the in-law responds provocatively that the man gets to see the idea behind some of her moves and actions (chikapa). That way, the in-law will have attended to a social conflict in a home.

Gossip ‘guhwa’ according to Bourdillon and Shambare (2002) is a casual and private communication between a person and a particular audience usually about persons who may be away. Gossip flourishes when specifics are difficult to get. Most communiqués only become gossip if the subject matter does not concern the parties involved in the discussion. However, as a way of indirectly sending some message to an intended audience or revealing a closely kept secret, a ‘sahwira’ could embark on some gossip. Gossip avails to the public information that may be classified as secret in society.

‘Imi mai X, hamunyari kuenda mhiri kwaY kunosvika pakudanana nasekuru venyu ivo mbuya varipo. Kuto kanyaira semakakwana, makashaya dhara renyu? Munoda kuti mhuri yavo itambure, vaite nherera nekuda kwenyu? (sic) renyu ndorinoda ku (sic)muridzi otoshaya zvinhu zvake, kwanai, pfirai pasi nhasi imbwa dzinhonge’

(X’s mother, are you not ashamed of your behaviour, having a love relationship with your uncle who is married to someone close to you? Couldn’t you find your old man? Do you want that family to suffer simply because you want to enjoy with someone’s husband. Do you think it’s your vagina only that needs to be sexed, starving the wife? Stop it today)

This is a typical scenario that may be experienced in the villages where a ‘sahwira’ reprimands an alleged adulterer in the neighbourhood while the rest of the gathering is watching and laughing as if it was a drama. A ‘sahwira’ could also reprimand others directly without fear or bias.
In cases where it is difficult to reprimand directly, a ‘sahwira’ could resort to indirect messages meant to reach a particular audience. In Zezuru language, this is called ‘bembera’ whereby a person shouts wildly expressing his/her feelings about a particular activity, event or individual. The wild messages will be directed at some societal elements who may be involved in some immoral or illegal activity. In the event of a confrontation by the targeted audience, the shouting ‘sahwira’ can easily deny pointing finger at any specific individual in society. However, this method is reported to have served invaluably in most societies.

Negative informal sanctions are extemporaneous expressions of displeasure by groups and individuals over an immoral or unwanted deed in society. Society or some individuals may decide to impose informal societal sanctions as a way of expressing their disapproval over a deed by another member of the same community. These sanctions may be withdrawn as soon as the individual makes amends. In the Zezuru communities, such sanctions may include social isolation (kunyenyeredzwa nevamwe), boycotting social gatherings (kuramba kuuya parufu kana kuroorwa kwemwana), denial of social services (kunyimwa chikafu cheruzhinji) and non-inclusion in communal herding of livestock (zoro remombe) and communal task-work (jakwara)

While everyone could be a ‘sahwira’, there are some individuals who are by virtue of their societal positions or family ranks, just fit to become personalities of order and jocular reprimand in society. Such individuals could be the following; a sister’s son (nephew), a close neighbour, a mother’s brother or his son and a neighbour sharing the same totem or any nephew’s totem. Most of these individuals should be people of such relationship that they do not mind being rebuked or insulted for they take that as either friendly, jokes or simply ignore.

Summary
In this chapter, it was noted that to some extent, a ‘sahwira’ is someone who is there for you and who can be confided in. Effectively, to some extent, this qualifies Rath’s identified 8 types of friendships in society which are; cheerleaders, one who defends you, one you share like interests, one you call first and one who links you, one who lifts you when you are down, and one who helps with knowledge and guidance. It was also established in the chapter that there are generally two types of ‘sahwiras’ who are quite distinct and are identifiable through the following traits; one who is close and is as good as a best friend is always there for you, knows you secrets and can interfere in your social life. This is as good as a family friend and can also help with advice and new knowledge. The second type of a ‘sahwira’ is one
who is related through some totemic lineage, neighbourhood or born of a distant relative. This individual has the guts to say whatever he/she wants for as long as he/she believes that it sends a message which some may be considering sensitive. This type of ‘sahwira’ is the one who dramatises the life of a deceased during a funeral wake, one reprimands or cautions a person who may be considered sacred in society regarding extending advice. All of these responsibilities and practices by a ‘sahwira’ are efforts towards resolving conflicts in society though in some unique fashion.

For a long time, the Zezuru community has employed the ‘chisahwira’ approach to deal with social, economic and political conflicts successfully though there has not been adequate documentation and adaptation in line with modernity. The chapter also established that the concept of ‘chisahwira’ is just more than about friendship, good neighbourliness and companionship, it is about the establishment of peace, harmony and stability in society and provision of advice, counsel, care and progressive reprimand.

References


Chapter Six

‘Jakwara’ as a Conflict Resolution Measure.

‘Equal partnership and task-orientation; unity, respect, faith, loyalty and mutuality’.

Introduction

The Shona people and in particular the Zezuru have various ways of attending to social conflicts. One of such mechanisms is the practice of ‘jakwara’ which is common within this particular group of the Shona people in Zimbabwe. The practice has for a long time been employed to further a variety of developmental activities in the community ranging from agriculture to construction. The chapter focuses on how traditionally people regarded the practice and managed to preserve it as an engine for collective work and development. The chapter also looks at other potential benefits of the practice should it be nurtured to suit modern communities and technology. Finally, the chapter looks at how ‘jakwara’ practice contributes towards conflict resolution within the Zezuru communities in Zimbabwe.

The chapter attempts to understand how much endogenous knowledge systems have contributed towards development, peace and resolution of conflicts in the Zezuru communities with a view to further improve the mechanism and probably add value for future usability. This follows a realization that most of the communities in Africa have some forms of endogenous conflict resolution strategies which, after years of death, have been re-established and managed to play invaluable purposes in contemporary conflicts. This exploration is one in a series of wider effort to establish some of the recyclable systems for possible consideration.

‘Jakwara’

‘Jakwara’ or collective work is an approach that is used in communal areas to help each other execute heavy tasks especially related to agricultural activities. This activity is known by different terms within the Zezuru community with some societies calling it ‘nhimbe’ while others call it ‘jangano’ or ‘humwe’ (Tavuyanago et al, 2010). It must be realized however that ‘jangano’ was a concept seeking cooperation but without involving beer. However, for the purpose of this study, ‘jakwara’ will be used. According to Hampson (1990), ‘nhimbe’ is a work party centred on beer drinking and is normally limited to members
of the same village while *jakwara* is whereby the host prepares beer and asks interested members of the community to assist in working on a task without a responsibility to reciprocate. Chiwome (1992) on the other hand defines *‘jakwara’* differently as a post-harvest communal grain-threshing party which is accompanied by beer and singing while Murisa (2010) and Chiweshe (undated) call it labour pooling.

*‘Jakwara’*, according to Mugodzwa (2013), is a widespread technique by which farmers performed productive work on their fields in Charter now Chikomba district. Mugodzwa goes on to argue that *‘jakwara’*, which he calls communal labour practice was responsible for the increase in peasant production in Chikomba resultantly influencing peasant farmers to boycott registering for labour with the white settler office as required by the law then. In other words, the Shona people used their self-sustenance food wise to attend to one of their social and political problems. On the other hand, Swan (2008) posits that the Shona peasant farmers in Zimbabwe organized agricultural production at several levels from household to district. It was at higher levels that communities organized *‘jakwara’* to secure wider help.

It has been given out that *‘jakwara’* (reciprocal work) requires the following to thrive; unity, respect, faith, loyalty and mutuality and believes that individuals who request *‘jakwara’* have faith that other members of the society will turn up and those who turn up also believe that should they need to host their *‘jakwara’* in future, others will also attend in reciprocity. It is also believed that as much as one would have attended another’s event and eaten food, that other member of the society is expected to show up, participate and eat food in good faith. These activities are characterized by equal partnership and task-orientation; no-one looks at the sophistication of another’s equipment, all is required is religious execution of the task at hand. It is also argued that some members of the society believed that provision of delicious and good food to *‘jakwara’* participants was a way of luring people to their ceremonies ahead of any other events in the same locality and making oneself popular (Mugodzwa, 2013).

Some scholars (Impey and Nussbaum, 1996, Ngara, 2013) have often associated *‘jakwara’* with millet threshing alone in the traditional Shona society. However, this discussion realises that *‘jakwara’* is any traditional cooperation in the execution of household chores from agricultural to construction work. This view is also expressed by Murisa (2013) who posits that the practice was developed within a family structure of social organisation where members of the same lineage group got organised into labour teams for ploughing, planting, weeding and other related field duties. Marisa notes that the practice is now being spread into areas where the lineage structure is either non-existent or poorly recognised. This export of
the practice has now to some extent resulted in the weakening of the concept thus rendering its capacity to address some of the societal challenges almost impossible. It has been suggested that as a way of preserving the practice and its relevance, there is need to re-establish and reinforce a sense of belonging within communities (Murisa, 2013).

Again, Wrolson (2009) gives out that ‘jakwara’ which is referred to as ‘nhimbe’ has been used in Shona societies to address some conflicts and topical issues largely using satire and theatre. Traditionally, work is accompanied by traditional beer (doro) and participants are urged to sing out any denunciations they have against anyone else in the community for as long as the hostility and anger were not taken home and harboured permanently. However, with the advent of modernity, this communal activity is no-longer accompanied by traditional ‘doro’ but by ‘doro’ as defined by Dodo et al (2012) that it is any traditional African brew.

As people executed their work collectively, they sing traditional songs that motivated them to work hard and endeavor to complete the task before they rested. The songs also assisted to synchronize the movement of whatever tools so that participants kept the same tempo and pace. Chiwome goes on to talk about jakwara songs in which he says participants are permitted to sing about topical issues in the village; rumours, scandals, and secrets commonly known as ‘chihwerure’. According to Chiwome (1992) and Wrolson (2009), such songs and their messages could not be repeated in any other social setting and neither could that be taken to implicate any person involved in criminal activities.

During the conduct of a ‘jakwara’ ceremony, there are procedures that are followed as a matter of principle and culture so that the surrounding community offers relevant support. First and foremost, the host seeks permission or simply informs the village-head of the intentions to hold this ceremony including all the dates, venue, likely invites and the nature of work to be undertaken. At least a week before the date, traditional brew is made so that it coincides with the ceremony date. Invitations are also send out to various village-heads and even the local Headman so that he/she also graces the ceremony. On the day, as early as 0400 hours, scores of people begin to arrive for the task so that work is undertaken while it is still cool. On average, in the Zezuru culture, about 15 to 20 participants gather; all armed with different skills and expertise.

After working for about 3 to 4 hours, people are served with breakfast which in the majority of cases consists of home-made bread ‘chimodho, chimubhaga or mupotohaya’ or sweet potatoes ‘mbambaira’
and tea or ‘mahewu’ (a non-alcoholic by-product of traditional brew). After breakfast, people are expected to work again for another 4 to 5 hour period before they are served with lunch which may be made up of boiled mealies ‘mangai’, mealie rice ‘manhuchu’ or simply ‘sadza’ and meat that is if the host can afford luxuries. Lunch is immediately followed up with some traditional brew which is served at intervals so that people do not get drunk before they finish their task. It is after beer has been served that participants can start singing relevant and inspiring songs. Some of the songs are meant to motivate people to work while some are meant to relay corrective or warning messages satirically to particular individuals in attendance. Some of the songs that are sung after children have been released to take livestock to feeding pastures are meant to teach sexual matters while others seek to arouse sexual desires within participants in preparation for their next sexual encounters at home. The level of preparation and the adequacy of food and beer determines the people’s response should another ceremony is organized.

**Endogenous Conflict Resolution Measures**

This chapter looks at the non-violent conflicts commonly described as latent or structured conflicts (Mpangala, 2004); those that involve local people and usually conflicting over scarce resources, gossip, and land boundaries amongst others. These approaches are commonly called endogenous conflict resolution systems and according to Jacobs and Zartman in Mutisi (2009), endogenous conflict resolution systems are ways and means that exist in a particular cultural context and must have been practiced for a long period of time. In Zimbabwe, within the Shona people, there are several methods that have been in use having been fused from all the ethnic groups that make up the Shona people. Some of these methods range from negotiations, compensation, marriage, death, and court systems amongst others (Dodo et al, 2012). Most of these methods had been in use so much so that almost every member of the community had become familiar with them and they had become part of the community.

Since the colonial era, most of the traditional methods that were in use in resolving conflicts in the Zezuru community were eroded. Colonialism brought with it a variety of influences that impacted on local cultures and governance systems. Some of the systems and beliefs that were introduced by colonialism included Christianity, technology and the media; which all negatively impacted on traditional governance systems especially the adjudication part of it. It has been argued that the ‘forced’ imposition of alien conflict resolution systems on the Shona people has contributed towards the sidelining of endogenous approaches which are known to be based on reconciliation, consensus and cooperation (Sillitoe, 1998).
The Shona in Zimbabwe were not the only people whose traditional systems were affected by colonialism and modernity, several other communities across Africa suffered. It must be realized that several other communities had their culturally-imbedded means of resolving conflicts. In particular, the Somalis had Guurti and dia systems (Zartman, 2000), while Uganda according to Lederach (1997) and Mutisi (2009) has abunzi and mato oput systems amongst others. Other approaches that have been used elsewhere include; curandeiros system of Mozambique, Moots system of the Kpelle people in Liberia, chisahwira of the Shona people in Zimbabwe, ndendeuli system of Tanzania, and the gacaca of Rwanda and jir system of the Tiv people in Nigeria amongst others. This is not to say the above cited approaches were the only ones that effectively resolved conflicts in society. Most of the approaches were effective and efficient as they were locally owned and locally designed. Besides, communities understood them so much so that they participated in their use sincerely and adhered to their verdicts.

The Food Component of ‘Jakwara’

Like any other celebratory party, ‘jakwara’ is accompanied by traditional beer and food as elements that mark the end of an activity where participants sing, dance and merry till the beer is finished. The level of excitement and adequacy of beer and food characterising this activity determines the response by members of the community should another gathering is organized. This notion is confirmed by such traditional proverbs; ‘ukama igasva hunozadziswa nekudya’ which literally means that all relationships are not complete without food. Another proverb, ‘idya nehama mutorwa anokanganwa’ implies that whenever one gets food, share with a relative because a stranger quickly forgets. Contextually, what this saying means is that whoever attends the communal gathering and participates becomes a ‘relative’ who then is supposed to share the available food. Food and beer availed during the event to some extent bind participants together and also create relationships that sometimes last forever. In the Zezuru culture, it is believed that beer creates relationships and is also consumed by friends as literally given in the Shona idiom, ‘hari yemadzisahwira’.

Conception of the Practice by the Zezuru people

Like is has been noted by various scholars cited above, the practice of ‘jakwara’ is a very common phenomenon within the Shona people in Zimbabwe. It has different titles in different regions depending on particular cultures and how it is practiced. Various scholars noted the various names; ‘jakwara’ (labour pooling), ‘nhimbe’ (collective work), ‘jangano’ (rotational duties), ‘humbe’ (work party) and ‘humwe’ (cooperation) amongst others. Within the same Zezuru communities, the practice is preserved for the following purposes;
• Collective work in agricultural field work like tilling, planting, ploughing, harvesting, threshing, and preservation of both human and livestock food for future use.
• Collective work in infrastructure construction like huts, granaries (hozi), cattle pens, paddocks and wells.
• Collective felling of firewood for various purposes; tobacco curing, beer brewing and village ceremonies like funerals, appeasement of the dead and appeasement of the spirits.
• Collective brewing of traditional beer in the villages.

It is also believed that the practice has to some extent helped ease some of the work in the rural areas and in influencing development. Besides, the practice was reported to be a catalyst for cooperation, unity and togetherness in the villages.

‘Jakwara’ as a Conflict Resolution Measure

‘Jakwara’ is a culturally imbedded social system which has been used to influence productivity and effectiveness in most communal societies in the Shona and in particular, the Zezuru people. However, what most people had not really observed was that besides issues to do with productivity, this practice also served as an effective mode of conflict resolution in society. The system is culturally driven. Culture is a system of ethics and socially acquired behaviours that are shared and spread from one generation to another by members of a particular social group. During these ceremonies, participants sing and dance as a way of motivating themselves and synchronizing their work performances.

The system necessitate the achievement of various goals and activities through the employment of various elements like songs, dance, joke and caricature, sharing food and drink and simply spending time together. Each of the activities and elements employed during this occasion had a particular responsibility to play. According to Chiwome (1992), some of the songs sung during ‘jakwara’ events help individuals laden with secrets and defiant feelings to say them out in an orderly mode while involved in an economically productive project. Dance also brought joy and happiness to the participants and allowed people to interact freely expressing their feelings through dance while joke and caricature created humour which allowed people to spent time together in high spirits. It is also through these jokes that friendly people, especially the ‘sahwira’ relay their messages to personalities in society who are deemed sacred. Messages that help people reform, accept reality and become good neighbours are delivered through jokes and caricature attracting no reprisals.
As clearly pointed out by Wrolson (2009) and Murisa (2013), the practice serves various roles in community. Some of the important responsibilities of ‘jakwara’ were to ensure sharing of information, experiences and the generation of ideas. As people work around millet threshing, either they sing informative songs or they share ideas on some topical issues in the community ranging from family administration to village development. Through such forums, people get to appreciate each other’s views and perceptions so much so that hostilities and suspicions begin to wane off and in the process building relationships. In other cases, such ceremonies were used as platforms to meet potential marriage partners especially by widowers and widows in the villages. These marriages also helped to build bridges between communities that would have shared strained relationships.

From the studies and experiences on the ground, it is observed that the practice allowed communities to maintain oneness and a sense of community as they shared various resources in society ranging from labour to food. As people gathered to execute a task, they pooled various expertise and skills towards the completion of one household’s assignment. Similarly, those who would have long hosted their ceremonies are also expected to offer their services wherever another ceremony is hosted. The practice helped pool different skills together for the success of a single project in society.

During a ceremony that was held in Chikomba, it was observed that ‘jakwara’ practice brought fun during a period which was highly stressful to other people. In the rural areas, some people face different challenges ranging from food scarcity, lack of drought power, lack of finances up to lack of entertainment. However, when this ceremony was held, most people seemed to enjoy all the activities ranging from the availability of food, beer, socialisation up to entertainment. It was also observed that once people had some work and entertainment to keep them busy, there were very little chances of engaging in activities that generated conflicts. Besides, the fact that they were enjoying the songs and dances meant that they were interacting with all their potential enemies and strangers.

The practice was also noted to be creating a forum to sing out any criticisms they had about anyone else. Like it was observed during the ceremony and supported by other scholars above, participants were free to express their thoughts and criticism about any other member of the society especially those that they could not directly and formally confront or reprimand. Some participants could be heard singing satirical messages directed at the kraal-head whom they felt had deliberately absented from the ceremony. The practice also encouraged tolerance as bitterness could not be held against those who sang out their criticisms against others. The practice provided for social teases which helped remove tension and
suspicions in society. There are individuals commonly called ‘sahwira’ or joking friend who are free to say out whatever they like to people as a way of correcting social ills. During a ‘jakwara’, any member has the freedom to caution, remind or reprimand anyone satirically except in cases where there are restrictions based on one’s age compared to the person he/she intends to reprimand. In the Zezuru culture, young people are not generally expected to either reprimand or confront their elders. For as long as people expressed their thoughts during the ‘jakwara’ ceremony, it was unacceptable for anyone to confront or seek clarification well after the ceremony. Actually, no-one was expected to take offence from any activity that transpired during a ‘jakwara’ as it was regarded a social platform where people could mingle informally and share jokes and advice.

The practice of ‘jakwara’ brought cohesion and togetherness in society. This practice is being used to bring together members of political parties who once clashed and were hostile to each other so that they could re-establish broken relationships and possibly extend apologies informally. Besides, cohesion and togetherness also ensure production efficiency and effectiveness. Zezuru communities in Chikomba largely depend on subsistence farming which is more about collective hard labour to produce enough to sustain a family till the following season. The district has no other viable economic areas except subsistence crop and livestock farming which rely on communal work like looking after cattle collectively ‘(ma)janha’ (duty) and ‘(ma)jakwara’ (ma-plural).

Traditionally, a ‘jakwara’ was used as a neutral forum to mobilise people so that they could work collectively. This, to a great extent helped in revitalizing community relationships where most topical issues were deliberated and where people with dissimilar thoughts addressed their differences peacefully. The fact that most of the ‘(ma)jakwara’ were usually led by traditional leaders, a revered constituent in society, the process succeeded in encouraging acceptance of opposing thoughts between members of the same community. It was also a forum and tool for education and socialisation. As people worked, they shared knowledge and experiences which were important for one’s survival. Some of the knowledge and information that they shared helped to either neutralize or resolve conflicts in society. What the elders usually taught or exposed to their children shaped the way the latter behaved and depicted themselves in society. It must however be realized that during most ‘(ma)jakwara’, elders taught their children issues around peace, good neighbourliness, development, tolerance, patience, acceptance, humility and perseverance amongst others. These were some of the basic elements of community socialisation which moulded society into a civil one that did not promote or propagate conflicts.
Weaknesses of the Approach

It has been noted that the approach brings together individuals who are respected in society and never those at the periphery. Most ‘jakwara’ activities have been held for respected members of the society for various reasons; they are either respected or feared, they have resources to feed participants and that some poor members of the society partake in anticipation of incentives and recognition. There is however an argument that few people would happily attend ‘jakwara’ events at homesteads of known violent personalities or witches. In some instances, the practice promotes unnecessary competition which ultimately leads to social conflicts as households try to host the best ceremony in the community. It has also been observed that some of the platforms created by this practice avail a forum for unhealthy gossip which also leads to conflicts.

It has also been noted that the practice is almost unknown in most communities because of modernity, rural-urban migration, land reform programme which saw thousands of rural people moving into the farms and merging with people of other ethnic and traditional backgrounds and technologisation amongst others. This alone has to some extent, contributed in the erosion of the practice from the communities. The practice has over the time failed to adapt to dynamic communities. It has been established that most people in the rural communities are no longer aware of how the practice helps let alone some of the songs and dances associated with the practice. This, to some extent is due to the people’s reluctance and simple failure to document and pass on indigenous knowledge to younger generations. Most noticeable is that the concept of ‘jakwara’ is not only a conflict resolution measure; it is also an effective preventive mechanism. While in most instances, conflicts were prevented well in advance as soon as they were identified, in equally same instances, some conflicts were also resolved at various stages of manifestation.

Summary

It has been noted that while some of the cited scholars above have not brought out the element of conflict resolution in their arguments, it is evident from the roles that they cited as played by ‘jakwara’ that they all sought to sow peace and harmony in society. Besides serving as a conflict resolution system, ‘jakwara’ also plays the role of conflict prevention as created relations stop potential hostilities. The practice has been noted to be influencing several situations in society like unity, cooperation and togetherness though the participants would have been to some extent, motivated by the provision of food and traditional beer. It has also been noted that the practice is almost unknown in most communities because of modernity, rural-urban migration and technologisation amongst others. The chapter recommends that in order to preserve the practice, it may be important to upgrade the practice so that it
meets contemporary ways of cooperation in communities. Unless there is some means of documenting and preserving the practice, in no time, the heritage will soon be unknown in the Zezuru communities.

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Chapter Seven

The ‘Bira’ Concept in Zimbabwe.

‘People have various conflicts and obligations which are supposed to be addressed by the same communities’.

Introduction

In this chapter, I deliberately fused concepts from sociology and conflict as a follow up to some early gurus in sociology and as an attempt to develop the field of socio-conflict resolution. Some of the gurus who have contributed in the field of sociology as it relates to the issues around social conflict are; Karl Marx, Auguste Comte, George Simmel and Sorel, Ralf Dahrendorf, Alfred Marshall, Emile Durkheim, Vilfredo Pareto, and Max Weber amongst others. I also deliberately drew down the scope of the above cited scholars to the smallest level of society with a view to understanding how some of the societal and cultural practices help in the regulation of society and conflict resolution. This was precisely situated in the family level of the Zezuru people of Zimbabwe.

The Shona people of Zimbabwe have had their endogenous means of attending to socio-political and economic challenges ever since time immemorial. Amongst the several means is the ‘bira’ spiritual dance ceremony which is an all-night ritual in which family members call on ancestral spirits for direction and intervention. This practice is applied in various circumstances, all with a view to either resolve a conflict, register an appreciation or as a cultural rite. The chapter seeks to look at how ‘bira’ practice has served as an endogenous conflict resolution mechanism within the Zezuru people in Zimbabwe. This is coming from a background where other cultures and ethnic groups have showcased their means of resolving conflicts in society.

This chapter seeks to understand the role of some of the cultural practices in resolving conflicts. However, to achieve that objective, the scope of the discussion is structured in a manner that lays bare the structural-functional approach of the cultural practices especially the traditional dance ceremony ‘bira’. This practice is taken as a means through which communities interact and share ideas and resources while they also interact with the long departed members of their families. To some extent, the success of some of these practices depends on the level of belief and accuracy in the conduct of the practice. Therefore, this
chapter is basically guided by a common position that ‘religion is belief’ implying that whatever one believes in sometimes works and may produce tangible and practical results.

**Background**

Like several other societies the world-over, the Zezuru people in Zimbabwe have for thousands of years survived managing their various conflicts through different means ranging from negotiations, compensation, court systems, physical fighting, marriages, cooperation and cultural rituals amongst others. However, the question that has for a long time been not adequately answered is ‘how some of the cultural rituals helped to resolve conflicts in society?’

Seke district is 40 kilometers out of Harare and neighbours with Chitungwiza Municipality to the north, Marondera to the east, Chiota to the south and Beatrice to the west. Because of rural–urban migration and the influence of Harare and Chitungwiza, there is limited activity related to culture and traditional beliefs. Seke urban is part of Chitungwiza Municipality which is 30 kilometers out of Harare to the south east. Because the town is a dormitory high density area for Harare, it has over a million inhabitants of different cultural and religious backgrounds who tend to fuse their belief systems with their neighbours.

The history of all cultures so far has been a history of class struggles and cultural collisions. In most societies and cultures, there are exogenous conflicts imported from outside and endogenous conflicts created within. This chapter focuses on both types of conflicts as they relate to cultural practices; some of the conflicts are driven and influenced by other people, families and communities while others are generated within.

In the Zezuru societies, people have various conflicts and obligations which are supposed to be addressed by the same communities. What has however happened over the years is that people developed some systems to regulate and attend to their needs. One such system is the traditional dance ceremony ‘bira’.

People hold these ‘biras’ for various agendas and sometimes fail to realize the other role that they do play; that of conflict resolution. As communities hold a dance ceremony to seek rains, a ceremony to accept the spirit of the dead back into the family, a ceremony to acknowledge success and a ceremony to seek social intervention, they all seek to address some societal or family problem/conflict.
**Traditional Shona Beliefs**

Although the bulk of Shona people believe in God, almost all of them still have faith in their ancestral spirits that they are their mystical guardians. The Shona have a wide range of beliefs; rain-making, sacredness, ancestral spirits, life after death in the atmosphere, avenging spirits, taboos and several others (Pfukwa, 2001, Chiwara et al, 2013). All these and many more play a role of regulating societies and giving direction to how governance systems are handled. The beliefs also help to set social bench-marks, social rules and guidelines in the manner in which people relate and conduct business.

**Spirits**

Spirits are unseen sacred cultural beings who are believed to reside in the spiritual realm where all the dead go and begin to oversee the living. Spirits manifest to the living through one of the selected person within the family who then assumes the personality of the dead person and starts to give directions and foretelling the future. Spirits in most cultures especially the Zezuru are respected and valued as the main guardian of all the living beings. It is also believed that the spirits are the major link between God and the living people. There are various reasons why spirits are valued in the Zezuru culture, one of which is their ability to influence and make changes independently.

Spirit manifestation, according to Masquilier (2001), concerns marital relationships among masculine spirits, feminine hosts, and partners. In some of these accounts, marital relationships concerning spirits are not regarded as real marriage, but are recognized through analogy. Igreja et al. (2008) also posits that females married to water-spirits ‘Njuzu’ have a tendency to experience problems bearing children and that such women are hard to control and unamenable to domestic chores thereby becoming bad wives. In some cases where a woman is possessed by a male spirit, the woman behaved as if she was a man so much so that if the husband wanted to be intimate, he would need to request for permission from the ‘grand-father spirit’ otherwise the woman could get into a violent trance in the middle of the intercourse and start to beat up the husband. In other situations, relationships between spirits and feminine hosts are considered real marriages. Igreja et al (2008), argues that there are virgin girls who are given away as wives to avenging spirits ‘ngozi’ as a way of redressing a moral error committed against them.

Most spirits explain the aetiology of bad luck and disasters and present curative interventions through traditional healers. Spirits can possess both women and men who can also be initiated to work as healers. In the ancestral spirits realm, there are also structures similar to those followed by the living. Precisely, the hierarchy follows the order of age and seniority in the family and to some extend supported by the
totem system as it is believed that people of the same totem are related as they would have originated from the same great grand-father.

**Traditional ‘Bira’ Roles**

The spiritual dance ceremony ‘*bira*’ served various purposes in society; appeasement of the dead ‘*kurova guva*’, paying tribute to the ancestors ‘*kukudza/kurangarira vadzimu*’, evoking spirits ‘*kukumbira mudzimu*’, celebration ‘*mhemberero*’, house warming ‘*kuratidza musha*’, seeking family blessings ‘*kuuraya gono/kuparadza bhuru remusha*’, rain-seeking ‘*mukwerera/mutoro*’, thanking the spirits for successes ‘*kutenda mashavi*’ and memorial programs ‘*mharadza musasa/nyaradzo*’ and several others.

Some people call this ‘*mutambo*’ for party.

In the Shona culture, if an adult person dies, the family waits for just about a year after the death to hold a special ritual to receive her or his wandering spirit ‘*Mudzimu*’ back into the family. This ritual is called ‘*kurova guva*’ appeasement of the dead. This is a customary ceremony conducted in honour and commemoration of the departed by the living generally after a rain season in the year after passing away. The ceremony is first and foremost held to remember the spirit of the deceased back into the family and subsequently resolve all outstanding extended family problems (Fontein, 2009).

Traditional dance ceremonies are also meant to pay tribute to the ancestors ‘*kukudza/kurangarira vadzimu*’ who would have guided the family for a particular period or through some difficult era. It is believed that paying tribute to the ancestors opens other and more avenues for prosperity. Like Christians who make offerings or tithes to God, traditionalists also make their offerings through this process. Similarly, like Christians who believe that if they receive fortunes from wherever, it is God, traditionalists also believe that whatever good and success that they record, would have come from their ancestors. This practice is not meant to seek reciprocation from the gods but simply to pay tribute. Closely akin to the above issue about paying tribute is the idea about celebration over some achievement or success ‘*mhemberero*’. In the Zezuru societies, people celebrate when they record successes like building a house, buying a car, marrying, wedding, bearing children, buying cattle and others. These celebrations are held in honour of the ancestors who would have created opportunities and made it possible. They are also held so that more opportunities are created. People also choose to thank the spirits for successes that they would have recorded over a period ‘*kutenda mashavi*’. There are some individuals who are said to be possessed by spirits of hunting ‘*shavi rekuvhima*’. The spirit of hunting allows an individual to easily mobilise or get whatever he/she wants in life. That way, they are called hunters ‘*vavhimi*’ because they
get whatever they want in life. Such personalities are identifiable by their daily dress of a red/black/white checked cloth called ‘retso’. In extreme cases, other people end up acquiring goblins ‘chikwambo’ as a way of enhancing their fortunes.

In other instances, people hold dance ceremonies solely to warm their new houses in what is called house warming ‘kuratidza musha’. House warming involves either creating a new home within the original village or establishing a completely new one outside of the village, sometimes in another area far away. The essence is to invite the spirits to see where one is now based and be able to look after that family continually. In the Zezuru culture, they call it ‘kusiya mumvuri mumusha’ leaving a shadow protector in the village.

Sometimes in families there instances when some people fall ill and fail to get medication from all possible institutions; hospitals, prophets and even traditional healers till the family concerned is advised to consult specifically around a possible spirit manifestation on the ill personality. It is after this information that the family holds a dance ceremony to evoke spirits ‘kukumbira mudzimu’ so that they allow the manifestation of a spirit on the sick. It is also believed that once that spirit manifests, the entire family will be protected as the spirit will be responsible for the entire extended family including all those sharing the same totem. The process of evoking spirits is a lengthy one which involves wide consultations with various spirits before confirmation by other spirits during such ceremonies where other senior spirits will be able to certify whatever will be said and pronounced by the spirit through a new medium.

There are some families that are ardent believers in traditional systems so much so that they hold dance ceremonies annually as a way of seeking family blessings ‘kuuraya gono/kuparadza bhuru remusha’. This is a practice whereby the family or village slaughters a bull and present it to the ancestral spirits in return for blessings for a particular period. In this practice, every member of the family present is blessed and assured of some success in whatever he/she pursues. The idea is not to bless every member of the family, but to extend fortunes to those who would have attended and fulfilled some rites like eating some specially prepared dishes of meat and porridge made out of ‘rapoko’ ‘bota rezviyo’ and taken by fisted hands ‘kuhwambura nechibhakera’.

One of the most prominent purposes of a dance ceremony is rain-seeking ‘mukwerera/mutoro’ whereby a community through its traditional leadership asks God for some rains as a way of averting hunger and poverty. Rain-seeking ceremonies are hosted by several families or villages that would have anticipated a
drought and decide to mobilise resources for the ceremony. The ceremony is then conducted at a
designated place under a tree called ‘muhacha’ (*Parinari curatellifolia*) which is considered sacred as far
as traditional spirits and rituals are concerned. It is argued that if conducted properly, by the time the
dance ceremony ends, rains would have either started pouring or rainfall clouds building.

Traditionally, people held memorial services ‘mharadza musasa/nyaradzo’ whenever a person died as a
way of celebrating his/her life and consoling the bereaved family. This was usually done at least after
three full moons to allow the spirit to settle wherever it had gone. These memorial services were
conducted through a ‘bira’ ceremony where various spirits could speak to the living about the deceased’s
welfare and concerns if ever there were any. Unfortunately, in the present day, people are choosing to
follow the Christian mode of funerals and life where these memorial services are now being led by men of
the cloth. There are however some families that fuse Christianity with traditional rituals while others first
conduct traditional rituals on the eve of the Christian ceremony. This, to some extent shows that while
people have been christened, they still have faith in their traditional systems. To some extent, it shows the
level of confusion in the people who cannot make a clear choice between traditional and Christian
systems.

Chasing away harmful spirits and curing sickness ‘kudzinga mhepo nekurapa vatana’ may be achieved
through dance ceremonies that are conducted at family level. While some people take advantage of
already hosted ceremonies to consult and get medication or advice, some actually sponsor the hosting of
such ceremonies so that their illnesses and misfortunes may be cleansed. Such specific ceremonies are
usually hosted only if there is some serious illness or misfortune in the family. Such ceremonies are
usually experienced in the urban area of Seke where people will be seeking employment and to enhance
their businesses.

‘Bira’ Procedures

Traditionally within the Shona people and the Zezuru in particular, ‘bira’ is a sacred and valuable
ceremony which addressed most of the socio-economic and political challenges in the community.
Therefore, whenever a family wanted to hold one for whatever reason, all the interested stakeholders took
their time; commitment and effort to ensure success. While there are various types of such dance
ceremonies, generally a dance ceremony is conducted following a particular format. The preparation of a
dance ceremony requires wide consultations with both families; those from the father/man and those from
the mother/woman side and their respective ancestral spirits.
The dance ceremony is accompanied by traditional music called ‘mbira’ and which uses ‘mbira’ and gourd shakers ‘hosho’ as the main instruments with the power to evoke the spirits of the dead. The type of ‘mbira’ that is played in the ‘mbira dzavadzimu’ category is called ‘gwariva’ and is played by either young men who are possessed by spirits or by elderly men who are deemed clean called ‘gwenyambira’; those who would have abstained from sex for some weeks. All the participants in the dance ceremony are not allowed to wear shoes till the end of the ceremony. ‘Mbira’ music is an extension of the knowledge, spirituality, ethos and mythology of the Shona people.

After the parties have agreed to the idea of holding a dance ceremony, beer popularly called ‘hwematanda’ or ‘muchaiwa’ is brewed from rapoko over seven days. This beer is brewed out of ‘rapoko’ meal ground by virgin girls who are considered ‘clean’. The same girls are also responsible for the collection of water from the spring under the guidance of the elderly women who would have reached menopause stage. The brewing process is done by elderly women who will be based out of the village in a makeshift home called ‘musasa’. The makeshift home is built out of a tree called musasa (Brachystegia spiaformis) hence the name ‘musasa’ and the tree is considered ‘clean’ as it is never used for any cultural or religious rites.

The ceremony is also accompanied by food whereby a beast is usually slaughtered to serve as relish. The spirits are also presented with a goat and white chicken before they are slaughtered. White chicken resembles purity and cleanliness while a goat is a traditional livestock used for cultural presentation of food to the ancestors. When people are served their supper ahead of the ceremony, while everyone else gets meat and sadza, the elderly members of the host family are served with rapoko sump with chicken and or rapoko sump with goat intestines wound on bybles ‘hura hutete hwakamonererwa pamupfumo weguru’

When the dance ceremony starts in the evening around 2000hrs, people start singing as the ‘mbira’ music plays. Usually, the first song to be sung is ‘nhema musasa’ in appreciation of the work to be done and what would have already been done at this site called ‘musasa’. This is a slow beat which sets the mood of the participants. During this time, people will be served with some traditional brew called ‘chikurura mabhachi’ (taking off jackets) which is light. The second song is ‘bhuka tiende or simuka titambe ngoma’ (dance to the drums) and the third most important song is called ‘mahororo’ (mixed melodies) and
sometimes supported by others like ‘kariganombe and nyamaropa’. The other song which is also sung and whose role is to ask the spirits to show up and give direction is called ‘bangidza’ (show direction).

Just about the time when the song ‘bangidza’ is sung in the early hours of the morning, the elders present beer in beer pots ‘pfuko’ to the ancestors in a particular order for blessings. The first pot is presented to the family head (father) if he is dead, the second to the grand-father (father to the family head) while the third is presented to family ancestor ‘Tateguru’ before the forth is presented to the family spirits/ancestors responsible for wealth mobilization and prosperity ‘Vashavi vemusha’. These four are from the male side of the two great grand-parents and the presentation of their beer pots will also be accompanied by extra pots with light and pre-fermented porridge like beer called ‘masvusvu and mhanga’ which are given to the ancestral hosts and the porridge-like beers are called ‘koka mukono’ (evoke the bull). From the female side, beer is presented to the following late greats; grand-mother who bore the mother ‘ambuya’. The great aunt and uncle, brother to grand-mother cited above. In some instances, water spirits ‘mashavi enjuzu’ may also be recognized through a process called ‘kupfupira’. The pot presented to the family ancestor will be shrouded in a black and white cloth while that presented to the ancestors responsible for wealth mobilization and prosperity ‘Vashavi vemusha’ will be shrouded in red/black/white cloth called ‘retso’.

When the time to drink beer comes after all the other rituals are done, the first beer pot is availed and served and is called ‘hari yevashavi’ (pot for the hunters). This pot is meant to acknowledge the role played by the spirits for wealth mobilization which is regarded as hunting. After this pot has been served, another beer pot is specifically served to the in-laws ‘hari yevakuwasha or madzitete’ and is meant to appreciate their chores and contribution to the entire family. This beer may not be shared with the entire attendances. The final pot to be served is for the family from where the great grand-mother was born called ‘ambuya’. It may not be shared with the rest of the people as those from the mother’s side ‘madzitezvara’ are treated sacred ‘vanyarikani’. The family head or community head’s beer pot is served at the end and is meant to clear beer hang-over the following morning after the ceremony.

It must be appreciated that as the beer pots will be served, because they are small, the beer quantities will be little. Therefore, alongside the provision of this beer which would have been presented to the ancestors for blessings, there will be more beer from the general beer pots called ‘makate’. However, as beer will be drawn from the general pots, the top most beer is served to the hosts in a manner considered to be
cementing relations. However, this is meant to ensure that the beer is poison-free and consumable by the rest of the people.

In the early hours of the morning, as people celebrate the ceremony, spirits begin to manifest and speak to the audience. Elderly leaders of the ceremonies put in place measures to vet genuine spirits from both fake and those meant to cause problems and conflicts called ‘zvipunha’. These fake or alien spirits may either be from other families not related to the host or those wondering in the wilderness called ‘zvinderere’. Once the genuine spirits have been established, they take turns to speak to the audience and ultimately presenting their possible solutions to any of the matters discussed; conflicts, hunger, lack, illness, leadership selection and future plans amongst others.

As soon as the spirits have spoken and gone, the ceremony is officially closed. However, people may continue with their song, dance and beer drinking till sun-rise. In the morning, people are served with sadza and meat before the last beer pot ‘hari yababa’ is served and people disperse. Arrangements are also made that some particular parts of meat from the slaughtered beast be given to some members of the attendance like a representative from the mother’s side, the leading spirit medium and the head aunt in the family as a cultural token of appreciation.

At the Seke urban dance ceremony3, the ceremony was held in the lounge of the host’s house in an urban area and that participants were fed with rice and chicken and other modern foods before they were served with clear beers though there were a few pots of traditional brew. It was also realized that most of the mediums for the spirits were youthful people dressed in un-African attires which were simply covered by black and white cloths. Also noticeable at this ceremony was that the sequence of songs was not in tandem with those in Chikomba and Seke rural. Besides, most of the attendances were of some high class driving posh cars and dressed uniquely except that they were all taking snuff ‘bute’. Some of the spirits actually manifested late in the morning around 0600 hours contrary to the times at the other two ceremonies where spirits manifested around 0230 and 0330 hours.

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3 This chapter is derived from ceremonies each in Chikomba and Seke rural in August 2013 and another in Seke urban in April 2014. The ceremony in Chikomba district was conducted outside a village in a ‘musasa’ with about 60 people in attendance including 6 spirit mediums while that in Seke district was also conducted in a ‘musasa’ with about 80 people inclusive of 9 mediums. The ceremony held in Seke urban was conducted at a house in a high density residential area with about 60 people and 13 spirit mediums. All the three ceremonies were hosted by people of the Zezuru group. Interviews and FGDs were conducted with seasoned spirit mediums who had just participated in the ceremonies.
Conflict Resolution Element

Various people and practitioners of traditional systems have always disagreed on the manner in which some practices are conducted and their purpose. This is mainly because of the different backgrounds albeit all in the Zezuru system. However, in this chapter, it has been established that there are various practices within the dance ceremonies which are meant to resolve particular conflicts while others achieve peace and harmony unintentionally.

One of the few foods or artifacts that the Zezuru people are prepared to share is beer. It is an element in society which has over the years managed to bring people together. In our research on traditional brew in Chikomba, (Dodo et al, 2012), we established that beer drink created a forum where people of various backgrounds and relationships could meet. In some instances, long-standing hostilities could be addressed as people shared beer. Traditional brew sharing actually demanded trust of the highest level as it forced people to drink from the same calabash regardless of the cleanliness of their mouth or teeth. This level of friendliness and closeness was aptly defined by a Zezuru saying; ‘hari yemadzisahwira’ (beer pot for friends). Closely akin to the above brew sharing is the issue to do with food sharing. Rarely do people meet to share food. However, in the Shona culture, it is believed that food is tastier if it is shared and shows the depth of the people’s relations and therefore during such traditional ceremonies people share marrying and celebrating. The Shona saying that ‘ukama igasva unozadziswa nekudya’ (relationships are incomplete till people share food) clearly shows the importance of food in relationships. Their ability to share in some instances means that the people are ready to interact with other communities. The interaction has often created forum for talks and relationship building.

The success of a traditional dance ceremony depends on the level of community cooperation from the initial stages of consultation, planning up till the event itself. It is this cooperation which the Shona impress upon when they say; ‘chara chimwe hachitswanyi inda’ (one finger does not crush a lice). Various people with different expertise come together imparting their skills towards the hosting of the ceremony. Some people or groups are invited to participate contributing their knowledge; whether they are friends or foes, the existence of an invitation makes people ignore their past hostilities. In some cases, it places great honour on people if they are formally invited to an important function in society.

Disclosure of extended family challenges in the public and referral of same to other healers and specialists for help has also helped resolve some of the long-standing conflicts in communities. There are families and communities that have lived with serious suspicions and allegations of witchcraft and other evil acts.
Some of these allegations and accusations are clarified and addressed in such forums leaving every family and village member satisfied. However, the spirits during the ceremonies ensure that they create no hostilities within the families by speaking diplomatically.

Partying all night is an occasion that is revered in the Zezuru societies especially when there is no alternative entertainment. Traditionally, in the absence of dance ceremonies, communities organize what is called ‘jiti, or pfonda’ (night dances) where youth in the rural areas converge singing traditional songs, dancing and playing drums. Such forums (bira and jiti) are used as entertainment, educational events and interactive occasions. Traditionally hostile youth from different villages and communities meet, sing and dance together in a friendly environment so much so that the differences end up forgotten. Such forums are also used by the same youth to identify marriage partners who eventually marry thus bringing the two families together.

All-night dance ceremonies like ‘bira’ create opportunities for round-the-fire discussions ‘dare’ where elders talk to the young ones about life and during the process passing on important history. It must be noted that while the majority of the participants will be involved in the dance for the better part of the night, the elders will be seated round a fire discussing community matters. They only leave the fire when the spirits are about to manifest so that they lead the discussion. It is therefore during the fire discussions that youth learn about cultural, social, marital, leadership and historical matters while the elders also solve important conflicts and address pertinent community matters.

When the traditional dance ceremony is planned, the host slaughters a beast for the people’s relish and other livestock for the official ancestral rites. It is not always that the host will be having the livestock at home. Therefore, the procurement of the required livestock sometimes creates relationships in the community as people negotiate for better prices. Similarly, the mobilization of resources like firewood and water that is done by the members of the community also helps refine societal relationships. People are sometimes asked to perform some tasks either for free or payment. As they undertake the tasks, relationships are either created or refined during the entire period of the preparations. This is in view of a common belief, also supported by Harold Saunders’ model of Sustained Dialogue, that the more people meet and interact, the more they get closer and build relationships.

Traditional dance ceremonies, like it was mentioned in the introduction of this chapter, help resolve conflicts to do with food security. When rain-making ceremonies are successfully conducted, drought
matters are attended to ensuring that members of a particular community are hunger-free. This is also in view of a common belief that people without food tend to engage in conflicts more often than those with enough food.

Resolution of the avenging spirit matters is one way through which traditional dance ceremonies can resolve societal conflicts. It has been observed that wherever there are problems and misfortunes related with traditional matters, people tend to throw accusations at each other. People, especially uncles sever relations over the cause and possible solutions to the family challenges. It is only after a dance ceremony that some of these problems are solved or at least have some clues regarding their possible solutions. Some of the family problems associated with avenging spirits usually leave a trail of misfortunes ‘munyama’ that some of the family members, if not all, fail to secure jobs, go barren and even experience serious poverty in their homes without any tangible solutions. Therefore, if the spirits address the challenges during the dance ceremonies, some of the problems and conflicts are resolved seeing the re-establishment of normal relations, eradication of poverty ‘hurombo’, joblessness ‘hurovha’ and barrenness ‘hungomwa’ within families.

However, the practice of holding traditional dance ceremonies ‘mapira’ has been to some extent compromised by a variety of factors which include the following; frequency of deaths due to the prevalence of HIV and Aids, migration due to economic and political reasons, economic challenges that have forced people to cross the borders for better pastures, Christianity influences and the general influence of modernity amongst others. Because of these and other factors, families are now finding it difficult to hold such ceremonies. Besides, there are very few people left in most of these communities who are knowledgeable about such traditional rituals. As a result of ignorance, some have chosen to follow the easier route of Christianity.

It was also observed that the manner in which the three observed ceremonies were held was different with the Seke urban adopting a completely different approach especially in the following aspects; venue for the ceremony, type of food consumed, type of beer taken, ages of most spirit mediums, songs sung, language used by the spirits and the time that the spirits manifested. What was noted with the Seke urban ceremony was that it was specifically meant for small-scale business people and others in illicit deals so that their businesses could be enhanced. However, on the issue about being really traditional and about ancestors, it remains to be answered through another research study.

4 Plural for ‘hira’
Summary

What was established during the study was perplexing. While there is a dearth of data on endogenous conflict resolution methods, there are a variety of practices that have traditionally helped to resolve and prevent conflicts from escalating and disturbing peace and development. It has been established in this chapter that the dance ceremony has a wide range of roles that it plays within the Zezuru societies, some of which might not have been explored in-depth to the benefit of the people.

It was however established that urbanization and modernization have serious effects on the conduct of the ceremonies as different cultures and totems might have been fused while the relevance was also compromised in the Seke urban ceremony. Besides the issue about urbanization and modernity, the practice was also noted to be suffering from other various challenges to do with HIV and Aids, migration, economic challenges and Christianity influences amongst others. From what was observed on the ground and from participants, it may be prudent that more of such practices be documented before all the people knowledgeable pass on. Besides documentation, there may be need for the practice and knowledge to be included in the Zimbabwe schools’ curriculum so that future generations are also empowered. In the absence of a deliberate effort towards sustaining the traditional practice, it is not surprising that it may have been completely rubbed from our societies in the next few years.

References


Chapter Eight

Traditional Story-Telling

‘Story-telling had a multi-dimensional approach; telling folk-tales, narrating past experiences about bravery and heroic successes or advice on life matters and entertainment’

Introduction

The Shona people and in particular the Zezuru had a variety of ways of imparting knowledge on conflict resolution and prevention mechanisms. One of such means was through story-telling, which was a traditional past-time event in most societies. Traditionally, families would sit around a fire in their round huts or in courtyard ‘dare’ especially after taking their supper and the only form of entertainment would be one member presenting a folk-tale to the rest. While most of these tales and poems were nurtured for the following reasons; to hold attention, re-live memories, humour, production of identity, education, entertainment and therapy, their long-term purpose was to impart wisdom and knowledge on life skills that ultimately contributed to conflict resolution and prevention methods. In this discussion, storytelling is interchangeably used for folktales.

This discussion is motivated by the traditional belief in societies that storytelling is an elderly function meant to keep them busy and away from business forums on account of aging and loss of memory and sensible reasoning. It is believed that whenever serious meetings are to be held in the Zezuru communities, most elderly members are diplomatically isolated by getting assigned to entertain children through storytelling. It is believed that as people get aged, they lose their senses and reasoning capacity. It is therefore against this hypothesis that the chapter was written to closely analyse the position. While there are a variety of storytelling modes (Neile, 2009), this chapter specifically focuses on the traditional folk-lore ‘ngano’ in both prominent forms; creation myths and aetiological stories as understood by Sunkuli and Miruka (1990).

Background

Story-telling is a practice whereby people especially families sit around a fire with one member telling a folk-tale, narrative or reciting a poem. Traditionally, story-telling was a responsibility of very elderly members of the families known as ‘sarungano’ who were treated as custodians of wisdom and
knowledge. However, with the advent of modernity and technology, such stories are being told as people watch television or listen to the radio. The latter situation has however been affected by the effect of the media as noted in the Media Effect theory, which posits that the media is the most talkative member of the family as it draws most of the attention. A story, according to Denning (2009) is anything told or narrated in the form of a set of proceedings whether real or fictional. Meanwhile, according to Branaghan (2010), a narrative is a narration of a series of proceedings with the following features; a storyteller, a geographic and social context in which the story is set, events that develop in a particular order, a listeners and some message that the account seeks to deliver.

Within the Shona communities, the forms of entertainment were somewhat limited especially at night ranging from story-telling ‘ngano’, night dances ‘jiti/pfonda’, shelling maize or ground-nuts ‘kutsonongora chibage kana nzungu’, night drinking ‘kumwa mahewu’ to grinding peanut butter ‘kukuya dovi’ amongst others. Of all these forms, story-telling was probably the most common and easiest to do. It was also taken as an opportunity to give the elders in the families a chance to impart their experiences and wisdom and transfer a society’s culture, principles, and history to the younger ones.

Traditionally, story-telling had a multi-dimensional approach; telling folk-tales, narrating past experiences about bravery and heroic successes or advice on life matters. Folk-tales were generally a means through which the elderly interacted informally with the younger generation and through which they informally ‘taught’ other family members about life in its entirety with a view to present figurative models of social prejudices to inspire reflection, dialogue and ultimate transformation. Simply presenting past experiences especially heroic successes and bravery helped instill confidence and determination in some family members. In some cases, it helped pass on some of the characteristics that were in the elderly members of the family like the ability to fight, the skills of hunting and excelling in certain activities. Life matters really involved advising the younger members of the family on how certain practices like circumcision or marriage were conducted and how certain challenges like village conflicts over pastures could be approached. It was through such forums that knowledge could be passed on and stored in various people for continuity. From another perspective, story-telling could also mean re-presenting past situations in a manner meant to re-live the people’s memories and emotions. That way, the practice could either lead to heightened hostilities or conflict resolution.
It is therefore against this background that this chapter was written so that there may be some closer understanding and analysis as to how the practice was carried out and sustained for the benefit of the societies concerned.

**Traditional Past-time Activities**

In the Zezuru communities, there is traditionally an activity referred to as story-telling ‘ngano’ whereby people narrate different old stories and experiences in a fashion that entertains and catches the attention of the listener. Traditionally, the stories were of past lifestyles, experiences, wars, tragedies, successes and several other memorable events and activities. This activity required a special skill to narrate stories in a creative and humorous manner, which also drew the attention of the audiences. Over time, the young ones would also be asked to tell their stories or those they would have heard from other places. This way, it was taken as a learning process in society.

In the villages, there are also night dances ‘jiti/pfonda’, which provides important entertainment to both the young and the old. Traditionally before the advent of technology and modern digital entertainment, there were no means of entertaining people after a hard day working. Therefore, these dances were important in refreshing the people’s minds and bringing the society together. It is important to realize that some of the lyrics in the songs relayed both informative and educational messages that audiences benefitted. Similarly, some of the dances and the manner in which dancers gyrated also relayed important messages in society. This type of entertainment was most popular with the young adults who took it as a ground to meet potential suitors while some only clandestinely met for sexual encounters under the darkness cover.

In families where there were more elderly people than the young and especially during the harvesting and the spring season, there was another activity that involved shelling maize or ground-nuts ‘kutsonongora chibage/nzungu’. While this was not so much about entertainment, it kept families interacting and whiling up evening time. Traditionally, this activity became a routine that to a great extent, it helped in addressing challenges to do with grain shelling and storage. Closely akin to the above activity was the night drinking ‘kumwa mahewu’ pastime. *Mahewu* is a porridge-like by-product of traditional opaque brew which is but alcohol-free. Sometimes, it is prepared from maize thick porridge/sump ‘sadza’ left-overs with some rapoko meal. It is taken slowly as people talk stories and may be consumed from the same cup. Traditionally, ‘mahewu’ was a symbol of oneness and a substitute for a full meal. It could be offered to visitors as a gesture of goodwill and taken as a past-time drink.
Conflict Resolution and Prevention Elements

Normally, story-telling is taken as a past-time activity, which is supposed to entertain people as they while up their evenings in the rural communities. However, what must be realized is that, there were several other purposes that they served, deliberately or otherwise, amongst them wisdom and knowledge dissemination. These two aspects helped in inculcating a sense of love, peace, harmony, tolerance, relationship, togetherness and the ability to converse, engage, confront, mediate (Price, 2007) negotiate, reason, persuade, enforce and analyse events as they unfolded. Some of the ways through which story-telling contributed towards conflict resolution and to some extent, conflict prevention included; education, information, entertainment, leadership skills, instilling courage and determination, exposing relationships between societies and families, and exposing the ills of violence in societies amongst others.

According to Branaghan (2010), people benefit most from storytelling by enthusiastically taking part through the ‘paivepo and dzepfunde’ interaction, inquiring and cooperating in a realistic and contextually rich background. It is in such circumstances that learning becomes deliberate. It is also argued that storytelling and narratives are very good at educating the audience as they are able to hold attention through humor and surprises. It is also worth noting that the depth of intimate engagement that is initiated by some of the stories provokes a depth of imagination in the listeners. Elsewhere, Gudhlanga and Makaudze (2012) have explained the other educational roles of folktales in society citing; child discipline, language training and responsibility amongst others.

Most folk stories usually end with natural justice; where the moral ones are compensated while the wicked are censured. This type of society impresses and satisfies children’s sense of justice thereby influencing their ethical judgment and the way they would treat others. Some of the folktales in the Zezuru societies simply disseminate information on various issues while others serve to entertain the audience.

Some of the stories ever documented on traditional folklore tried to reveal the leadership skills in some of the local leaders. Typically, scholars like Tredgold (2001) (The First Ones: Nehanda and Chaminuka, 2001) and Alumenda (2008) (Yemurai and the Talking Drum and Other Stories, 2008) try to present the greatness in some of the local traditional leaders like Mbuya Nehanda, Chaminuka, Kaguvi and others. Their stories also present the same leaders as peace-loving, visionary, determined and enduring in nature. The presentation of Mbuya Nehanda as a great leader also to some extent, show that
women can be great and good leaders in society contrary to what some patriarchal societies claim. In other words, the story attends to a gender conflict.

As a follow up to the above argument on leadership development, some stories in the Zezuru societies were just meant to instill courage and determination on the audience. Just like the biblical stories of Samson who fought a lion, there were also stories of Chaminuka who was said to have the magical powers to sit on the head of a spear without getting hurt. When children got some of these stories, they tended to like embracing and developing some of the traits shown by the stories’ legends and heroes.

There are also other local folklores which try to expose relationships between societies and families making use of animal actors like lions, elephants, hare, baboons, tortoises and others. Prominent writers of such stories include Miriam Bamhare, Stephen Alumenda, Margaret H. Tredgold, and Laetitia Gutu amongst others. These stories make use of local animals which are familiar to most of the children in Zimbabwe. Interestingly, some of the animals are known never to live together like a hare and a lion but are presented as good neighbours. To some extent, this simply shows that some of the ‘impossible’ are actually ‘possible’ given the right will and effort.

The practice of story-telling was also used to expose the ills of violence in society. There were stories that presented nasty scenarios and nasty outcomes from cases of violence. In children, a sense of fear developed as the messages sank into their heads and systems so much so that they began to hate violence. These probably resulted in the crafting of deterrent taboos as a way of regulating societal behaviour. Elsewhere, storytelling has been used as a powerful healing tool (Perrow, 2003). In other circles, it has been used to help remove the veil of denial and silence that usually characterise trauma and death in families. Of course, some stories help people recover from shock and trauma.

Storytelling also serves as an effective tool for identity production. It is argued that people come to be who they are through telling stories about their lives and living the stories they tell (Mayer, 2006). Identity as created in stories becomes a common method of outlining long-drawn-out social conflicts and usually lasts for as long as the story is told. Most of such stories like the Ndebele invasion of the Shona people ‘Madzviti/Masvina’ still depict the former as a bad people up to this day while the latter group is presented as a peace loving and civilized one. It is therefore the manner in which a story is told that plays a role in the socialisation of children, who then grow up with stories condemning violence against other groups in society.
Stories as Potential Destructors

While it has been widely acknowledged that story-telling has various positives for the Zezuru society, sometimes it is presented in a fashion that creates hostilities between and amongst groups that would have clashed previously. There are cases when stories are re-told to keep them alive in the lives of the surviving while in others, they are deliberately told to sow seeds of hate and rivalry. Such cases were noted during the Rwanda genocide of 1994, South Africa post-independence and in Zimbabwe by some members of the former liberation war fighters association and especially about the 1982 to 1987 Gukurahundi atrocities in the Midlands and Matebeleland regions in Zimbabwe. The presentation of some of these stories created hostilities that eventually saw thousands of other innocent lives either getting murdered or maimed.

In Zimbabwe, some of the presentations of war experiences have often renewed healed wounds to a point whereby some former freedom fighters have had to seek revenge on some white citizens for the experiences of the bloody liberation struggle of the 1970s. It has also been observed that within the Zezuru communities, there has never been institutionalized storytelling whereby people are formally expected to present their stories in public as a way of reconciliation and possible healing. Such cases have been reported in the Acholi and Tutsi communities in Uganda and Rwanda respectively (Mutisi, 2009), where perpetrators of violence and mass killings were required to tell how they committed the crimes as a way of rebuilding relations in society.

In other cases, story-telling has ruined the traditions and values of particular societies as some of the young people begin to realize how either backward or bad their ways of lives may be. This is to some extent seen in the arbitrary abandonment of traditional cultures by the youth in favour of the modern and western cultures. The same practice has also been used to suppress the views of some constituencies in society. There are societies that believe that some sectors like the youth and women are subordinate to their men and therefore are not free to either express their opinions or make decisions in society. This type of believe is passed on to younger generations through stories and songs.

Summary

The traditional Zezuru story-telling as a practice has been in existence for years and believed to have nurtured values, customs and practices. From the presentation, it has been clearly noted that the traditional practice comes in various forms and producing different outcomes. The chapter also identified some of
the practices that come with the story-telling concept. It was also exposed some of the weaknesses and challenges that are in the practice. However, it has been noted that story-telling was traditionally an effective means of resolving conflicts in the Zezuru society.

**References**


Chapter Nine

Endogenous Conflict Resolution Tools and Skills for Practitioners

'A society without its peculiar mechanisms of attending to local challenges is like a pot without a handle'.

Introduction

The Zezuru people have been studied by various researchers and various conclusions made about their ways of life, approaches to conflicts and how they have been affected by globalization. All these discoveries have been documented. Similarly, this book is a compilation of various studies on the people of the Zezuru group: where various endogenous conflict resolution systems are discussed at length. However, it is necessary to also look at how the Zezuru people have been doing it since time immemorial and what really motivated them to keep peace.

Skills for Practitioners

In most of the discussed endogenous methods, it has been observed that the practitioners and advocates of peace bear particular traits which distinguish them from the rest of the people in society. However, the establishment of peace in society, according to the Zezuru people is not a responsibility of the leaders, family heads or conflict participants only, rather, everyone is involved and has a particular role to play. It has also been noted that practitioners have special approaches and skills of enabling and helping the parties to appreciate their circumstances and interests, and inspire them to communicate, generate alternatives, and get to an agreement. Endogenous conflict resolution, according to the Zezuru culture does not only look at a verdict of who is right or wrong and the reprisal of offenders, it also looks at compromise and reunification of the parties to end conflict. From what has been observed in most researches, most endogenous methods are all-inclusive and consensus-based seeking to satisfy the needs of all parties. This is unlike in some contemporary conflict resolution efforts where there is an evident win-lose drive.

Amongst some of the skills include the ability to identify issues of the dispute. This ability is derived from the individual’s level of maturity and experience in life matters. Rarely is this skill learned from a formal school, it is either inborn or acquired over time through practice. No wonder why it is exhibited by people in leadership families and circles where they see it practiced often.
In other instances, there is need for one to be able to build trust amongst the parties so that they may be able to sit and talk over their differences. Most talks, as noted by Harold Saunders in his Sustained Dialogue Model, require a very high degree of trust amongst participants lest the talks break down. What one pledges in a meeting needs to be fulfilled so that the aspect of friendliness and rapport may be created in future. This characteristic should be encouraged by the practitioners of peace in the Zezuru communities. But how is this achieved? It is through; uprightness, honesty, maturity, display of wisdom, patience, tolerance, firmness, principles, determination, perseverance and flexibility amongst others.

In most of the conflict cases and their resolution measures, it was noted that there was a great need for patience, endurance, and perseverance if an amicable resolution was to be reached. Realizing that conflict participants may be coming from different backgrounds and influenced by various forces, there is need for a lot of patience as one tries to come to terms with what might be happening around a particular conflict environment. This is a trait that has been exhibited by most Zezuru traditional leaders who have over the years managed to embrace a diverse ethnic and cultural influences. Closely akin to the above is the need for endurance in conflict resolution. The Zezuru approach to conflict resolution requires that one waits for a solution that may take ages to reach fruition. In some instances, that fruition may also require that some pressure be exerted on the participants. Now, endurance is seen when the pressure produces some resistance in the form of reflective pain. In situations where endurance fails to produce instant results, one is now forced to persist and soldier on no-matter how tough and painful it may be. This trait does not have to be in a short-tempered or impatient person. Historically, the Shona people especially the Zezuru in areas around Mhondoro, Murehwa, Seke, Wedza, Mutoko and Goromonzi were known to endure the raids by both the Ndebele and the White settlers.

Unity has been another feature that has over the years necessitated effective conflict resolution efforts in societies. The traditional leaders’ councils ‘dare’ bring together different village elders who share their experiences and wisdom in their endeavor to craft feasible solutions to problems. The councils recognize community structures and their order of authority. Traditionally, in the rural areas, there is a Chief ‘Ishe/mambo’ who rules a country ‘nyika’, a Headman ‘Sadunhu’ who is in charge of a region ‘dunhu’, and Village-head ‘Samusha’ corrupted to ‘Sabhuku’ (one responsible for a book), who is responsible for a group of families falling under a common family-tree, totem or meadows. Besides the traditional authority bestowed on them, the Traditional Leaders’ Act also empowers them to police their local areas of jurisdiction.
Fear of the spiritual realm has also impacted on the behaviours of the Zezuru people. There are beliefs that if an individual wrongs another, the spirits or ancestors vadzimu of the victim are able to fight in defence. It is also believed that if one kills another kuponda, the spirit of the dead is able to revenge ngozi to the entire family until it is compensated kuripwa enough. Therefore, these beliefs have to some extent helped regulate societal behaviours and relationships.

Other important traits that characterise the Zezuru people in most of their conflict resolution approaches are thoughtfulness, empathy, and flexibility. Whenever mediators or any other participants in conflict resolution practices get down to business, they are so patient that they are able to think deeper than the actual conflict players themselves. That ability to think deep and imagine in the same situations as the victims or perpetrators helps them to empathise and be able to feel for others. In most cases, if an individual is able to empathise, he/she is equally able to adapt to various situations so as to craft a workable solution and intervention mechanism. That is what is generally called flexibility; the ability to recognize hierarchy while also accommodating other possible alternatives. All the traits described above are in the majority of cases shaped and guided by what is commonly termed common sense and rational thinking, which are but rare in most people.

**Challenges**

While the picture that is presented in this book is that of a group of people; effective and efficient in whatever it does in relation to conflict resolution, it is important to mention that there are also various challenges that hinder some of these conflict resolution efforts. Depending on where one is arguing from, some of the challenges were locally influenced while others were foreign influenced thus rendering them tough and beyond the capacity of the people’s management. However, some of the most prominent of the challenges observed include urbanization of most of the Zezuru settlements whereby inhabitants were expected to abandon their traditional systems for the foreign ones. The government’s Growth Point policy soon after Zimbabwe’s political independence that was meant to steer rural development played a pivotal role in the dismantling of some of the traditional systems. The government’s Growth Point policy soon after Zimbabwe’s political independence that was meant to steer rural development played a pivotal role in the dismantling of some of the traditional systems. To some extent, this was further compounded by the ‘urbanisation’ of the traditional leaders who were able and free to exercise their duties from various urban settlements and not necessarily in the rural areas. Also, to some extent, the interaction of people of different cultures, traditions and religions in the urban areas affected the sustenance of some of the Zezuru traditions and conflict resolution systems.
However, to undo this challenge would require that there be a deliberate effort towards the development of the systems so that they also transform for the better and in line with technological advancement. It is not possible to either regulate or stop urbanization given the trend of globalization; what may be possible is simply adjusting the traditional systems.

The influx of foreign religions in the Zezuru communities also to some extent helped diffuse the relevance and importance of some of the conflict resolution systems as some people no longer adhered to the dictates of the local cultures. The influence of the Christian churches that had established in most Zezuru areas was so huge that most people no longer wanted to be identified with their traditional systems. Christianity actually treated local systems; taboos, ancestors, totems, appeasement of the dead ceremonies, rain-making ceremonies, traditional task work, and traditional court systems, wizardry and others as devilish so much so that most people especially those who had attended mission schools began to hate anything traditional.

However, as the world elements are changing, there may be need to change the way people see things. This is aptly presented in my book titled ‘Seven Days of Apostolicism. Reflecting on Social Roles’ where I argued that the establishment of the African initiated church Johane Masowe Chishanu was a clear development of the traditional African beliefs into a more contemporary system. Where people were abandoning their traditional artifacts for the bible, the founder of the church simply brought the same traditional artifacts into the church where the congregants embraced them as needy resources.

The media has also influenced the collapse of the traditional Zezuru systems as it has done elsewhere the world-over. While it seeks to inform, entertain and educate the people, during the process, it had taken with it content that has not been palatable to the locals and inconsistent with the expectations of the people. The media has also shrunk the world into a minute arena where divergent cultures and traditions have been brought together at the expense of the weaker and minority systems like the Zezuru and others. Closely akin to the above is the diaspora effect, which has seen the behaviour and tastes of people overseas permeating into the local systems. This has been perpetuated by the movement of locals into other economies for greener pastures especially during the 1970s when Zimbabwe was waging a liberation war and in the 1990s when the Zimbabwean economy began to sink. Some of the locals who went abroad either married or simply abandoned their traditions for their new settlements.
As a possible remedy to the challenge, it may be prudent that the media simply adopts a positive attitude towards the diversity in cultures. The media may also need to educate the people on the pros and cons of all the different types of cultures and traditions so that people are able to make informed decisions. There may also be deliberate programmes by the media institutions to promote local cultures and traditions and where necessary, upgrade them socially.

Besides crossing the borders and marrying foreigners, there are also situations whereby people in the urban centres inter-marry; during the process diffusing their traditions and cultures. This has over the years seen the creation of another alien urban culture which clashes with the local systems. This situation can to some extent be addressed through a sustained educational programme whereby people are continually equipped with information on their historical lifestyles and traditional systems.

Youthful and westernized leadership has to some extent failed to sustain the traditional systems as per their terms of reference. This comes against the backdrop that traditional leaders as per the Traditional Leaders’ Act of Zimbabwe, have a mandate to uphold and nurture traditional cultures and heritage. However, because some of the leaders are getting western education and getting into leadership positions at tender ages, they tend to abandon their traditional and constitutional mandate. Some of these weaknesses are evident in the type of music and dance, language and dressing that the youthful leaders appreciate. This also to some extent requires a sustained informative effort on the part of the relevant agencies complemented by a deliberate development of the traditional systems so that they are appreciated by some of these youthful leaders.

**Summary**

This chapter rounded up what had been noted in the entire book researches; the types of endogenous conflict resolution methods, their strengths and weaknesses and what needs to be done to sustain the same methods within the society. The chapter also concluded that indeed all the endogenous conflict resolution measures that have existed over the years have been effective but have unfortunately succumbed to the effects of modernity and other natural changes.
APPENDIX 1

Literary Definition of Indigenous Terms

_Afa anaka_ - every dead person immediately becomes a valuable person in society no matter how evil he/she might have been.

_Bangidza_ - to show direction.

_Bembera_ - indirect messages meant to reach a particular audience.

_Bhuka tiende/simuka titambe ngoma_ - dance to the drums

_Bira_ - spiritual dance ceremony

_Bota rezviyo_ - porridge made out of rapoko

_Burururu/sahwira_ - one who is always close to you.

_Bute_ – tobacco snuff.

_Chara chimwe hachitswanyi inda_ - one finger does not crush lice.

_Chena_ - cleansing

_Chiwerure_ - scandals, and secrets

_Chipapa_ – response to sexual intimacy

_Chikomana_ - small boy (Chi-) showing the derogatory nature of the noun.

_Chikurura mabhachi_ – beer served to influence taking off jackets

_Chikwambo_ - goblins

_Chimodho/chimubhaga/mupotohaya_ - home-made bread

_Chimukadzi_ - woman (Chi-) showing the derogatory nature of the noun.

_Chimunhu_ - person (Chi-) showing the derogatory nature of the noun.

_Chiramu_ - jokingly get intimate

_Chirimo_ - spring season

_Chirume_ - man (Chi-) showing the derogatory nature of the noun.

_Chisahwira_ - a traditional concept associated with close friendship and characterized by openness, friendliness, caring, togetherness, harmony, empathy, and helping each other.

_Chivanhu_ - culture

_Dare_ - court system

_Doro/rematanda/ndari/ngoto_ - traditional brew

_Fambai zvakakanaka_ – travel well

_Gata_ – traditional ancestral consultations
Gate - clay pots
Guhwa - Gossip
Gwenyambira - young men who are possessed by spirits or by elderly men who are deemed clean called
Hakuna anozadzikisa vende rasiwa nemumwe - no-one is able to fill the gap left following the death of another
Hari yemadzisahwira - beer creates relationships and is also consumed by friends.
Hari yevakuwasha or madzitete – beer pot for the in-laws or aunts
Hari yevashavi – beer pot for the hunters.
Hosho - gourd shakers
Hozi - granaries
Hungomwa - barrenness
Hura hutete hwakamonererwa pamupfumo weguru - goat intestines wound on bybles
Hurombo - poverty
Hurovha - joblessness
Idya nehama mutorwa anokanganw - whenever one gets food, share with a relative because a stranger quickly forgets.
Ishe/mambo - Chief in charge of a country as per traditional boundaries
Jakwara/ nhimbe/jangano/humwe - communal task-work/collective work
Kakadzi - small woman (ka-stoutness of physical looks)
Kamwana - small baby (ka-stoutness of physical looks)
Karume - small man (ka-stoutness of physical looks)
Kuchekwa - initiation
Kudira mombe dzemusha - enthronement of village bulls
Kudzinga mhepo nekurapa vatana - Chasing away harmful spirits and curing sickness
Kufa - cessation of life
Kugadzwa zita remusha - title-taking
Kugara nhaka - inheritance programme
Kuhwambura nechibhakera - fisted hands
Kukudza/kurangarira vadzimu - paying tribute to the ancestors
Kukumbira mudzimu - evoking spirits
Kunyarara - silence
Kunyenyeredzwa nevamwe - social isolation
Kunyimwa chikafu cheruzhinji - denial of social services
Kuparadzana kuenda kuNyika-dzimu - departing to a spiritual realm where ancestors live
Kuparara - demise
Kuramba kuuya parufu kana kuroorwa kwemwana - boycotting social gatherings
Kuratidza musha - house warming
Kuripaa - compensation
Kuripa ngozi - compensating for a murder offence
Kuroorwa - marriage ceremonies
Kurova guva - returning the spirit of the dead into the village
Kurwa - fighting
Kusairira mombe kumafuro - control of livestock movement
Kusiya mumvuri mumusha - leaving a shadow protector in the village.
Kutadza bonde - weak and inexperienced sexually
Kutenda mashavi - thanking the spirits for successes.
Kutisiya - departing
Kutsiva - retaliation
Kutungamira - lead the journey
Kuuraya gono/kuparadza bhuru remusha - seeking family blessings by annually slaughtering a beast.
Mukwerera/mutoro - rain-seeking traditional ceremony
Kuzorora – rest/form of death where a person who would have suffered out of severe illness or old age finally succumbs to death.
Madzisahwira – plural for sahwira
Mahewu - a non-alcoholic by-product of traditional brew.
Mahororo - mixed melodies’ type of chorus
Maiguru - in-law
Mangai - boiled mealies
Manhuchu - mealie rice
Manyaradzo - memorial ceremonies
Maporofita - Christian mediums
Masvikiro - traditional spirit mediums
Masvusvu - beer by-products like
Matambudziko - a phenomenon that is hard to comprehend and explain
Mbambaira - sweet potatoes
Mbira - traditional music
Mhanga/biti – traditional brew by-products
Mharadza musasa/nyaradzo - memorial programs
Mhemberero - celebration
Mhepo dzakaipa - evil spirits/demons
Mombe yenheedzo – beast slaughtered to bid farewell to the deceased, serve as relish and its skin symbolising the decease
Muchakabvu - the deceased
Muchato - wedding
Mudzimu – ancestral spirits.
Muhacha - Parinari curatellifolia
Mukwerera - rain-making ceremony
Munhu anozvirwira - the dead has to fight against the killers.
Muparadzi - an element that destroys relationships
Muroora - daughter-in-law
Murume ndinomugona, wangu ndinomugona, hapana kwaanoenda - I can please a man, I can satisfy mine, and he will not leave
Musasa - Brachystegia spiaformis tree
Musasa – temporary shelter made of twigs
Musha mutema - still mourning
Mushamarari - announcer
Mutambo - party.
Muti - traditional medicine
Mutumbi/chitunha - dead body
Mutungamiri - director of programmes
Muzukuru - nephew
Mwari - God
Mwari vaita kuda kwavo - God’s will has been fulfilled
N’anga - traditional healers
Ndari - traditional brews
Ndini makauraya hazvina mhosva paukama - you killed, anyway, we are related
Ngozi - avenging spirits
Nhamo - challenges
Nhaurirano - negotiation
Njuzu - water-spirits/mermaid
Nyika - country
Nyika-dzimu - spiritual world
Pasipanodya – earth eats lives
Pfonda or jiti - village dance ceremonies
Pfuko - small clay pot
Retso - red/black/white checked cloth.
Roora - marriage
Rufu – death/parting away
Rufu ndimadzongonyedze – death causes confusion
Rufu rwakonzereswa nemumwe – death influenced/triggered by another
Rufu rwekukwana kwenguva yaMwari - death as a result of God’s time
Rufu rwekuzviurayisa - suicide or personal mischief.
Rukuva - potsherd
Rwukadzi - woman
Rwumai - mother (ka-stoutness of physical looks)
Sadunhu - Headman who is in charge of a region ‘dunhu’,
Sadza - maize-meal thick porridge
Sahwira - ritual friend who knows one’s secrets and usually acts as a right-hand counselor.
Samusha/Sabhuku - Village-head (one responsible for a book), who is responsible for a group of families falling under a common family-tree, totem or meadows.
Sekuru – uncle
Shavi rekuvhima - spirits of hunting
Tambirai mwana uyo - God, may you accept your child who has come)
Tateguru - family ancestor
Tete – aunt
Tipiwo nguva yekuchema gamba redu - give us time to mourn our hero
Ukama igasva hunozadziswa nekudya - all relationships are not complete without food.
Unhu/Ubuntu - humanity
Vakuwasha vanoremekedza madzitezvara, madzitezvara vachikudza vakuwasha - in-laws have high respect for each other.
Vavhimi - hunters
Waenda - a person has gone
**Wapera** - a person is finished
**Washaya** – a person has vanished
**Watisiya** – a person has left us

**Zigomana** - big boy

**Zirume** - big man

**Zoro remombe** - communal herding of livestock

**Zororai murugare** – rest in peace

**Zviera** - taboo

**Zvikadzi** - women (zvi) defining the ugliness of the person

**Zvinderere** - Spirits wondering in the wilderness called.

**Zvipfuyo zvekuchema** - goats or chicken presented by families to symbolize acknowledgement of their wrongs so that they may be forgiven

**Zvipunha** - fake spirits and those meant to cause problems and conflicts called.

**Zvirume** - men (zvi) defining the ugliness of the person

**Zvivakashure** - prefixes
Biography

Obediah Dodo is a Lecturer at Bindura University of Science Education in the Department of Peace and Governance. He is presently pursuing a Doctoral degree in Endogenous Conflict Resolution in Zambia (UniLus). He holds a Master’s degree in Peace and Governance, BA in English and Communication, post-graduate diploma in Peace and Governance, diploma in Security Management and a diploma in Journalism. Obediah has been in the field of Security Intelligence for 16 years before joining Zimbabwe Open University in 2010 and later on moving to Bindura University in 2011. He did his Masters’ degree internship at SAPES Trust under the mentorship of Dr Ibbo Mandaza. His areas of research interest include; youth violence and endogenous conflict resolution. He has published over 30 refereed papers and book chapters with internationally renowned journals, has conducted several researches and is a consultant on human rights, conflict resolution and peacebuilding matters. He is the author of Traditional Taboos Defined: Conflict Prevention Myths and Realities