

FAMILY AND RELIGION STUDIES

INTRODUCTION TO INDIGENOUS RELIGION (ZIMBABWE)

OVERVIEW

IR is a familiar term in Universities, Colleges, Schools; primary and Secondary, seminaries, Theological Colleges, Bible Schools etc. In Europe and the USA there are separate institutes for the study of IR and culture. This shows that there is a global interest in IR today. As a result, there is a volume of literature available in the subject. Many people however, view or treat IR with disdain. The people include the educated Zimbabweans. This disdainful attitude stems from:

- i. The people's perceived ideas about IR,
- ii. Complete ignorance of IR,
- iii. Faulty understanding of IR.

The source of faulty understanding is inherited from earlier European writers on the subject. Despite their faulty presentation, they extended some benefits that we need to acknowledge. We owe a lot to these early writers on the subject. They produced a wealth of information that we gather from their writings, for instance, Zimbabwean ways of life and their practices.

Until recently, Zimbabweans themselves did not have the penchant to write about their systems of thought. What we know of Zimbabweans today came to us through Ethnographers, Anthropologists, Missionaries, Explorers, Traders and Travellers. They put on record what they saw Africans *do* and *practice* as well as what they had Africans *say*. They also **INTERPRETED** these practices and sayings in *their own way*, hence misrepresentations.

Misinterpretations/Misrepresentations of Zimbabwean ways of life:

Accounts by European Travellers, missionaries and colonial agents are general unreliable. They are based on inaccurate information centred on:

- Cultural prejudice,
- Biased comparison.

Examples:

The Explorer Sir Samuel Baker says:

IR has no belief in a Supreme Being. It has no form of worship. Darkness of their mind is not enlightened by even a ray of superstition. Their mind is stagnant.

Sir Richard Burton says

IR is still at that rude dawn of faith called fetishism . It has barely advanced to idolatry. He has never grasped the ideas of a personal Deity, a duty in life, a moral code, or a shame of lying. It does not believe in a future state of reward and punishment. People who practice this religion's brain was too small for civilized development.

As a result, despite efforts by Zimbabwean Scholars to correct the wrong impression people have about IR, Westerners as well as some Zimbabweans continue to regard IR as worthless and devoid of spiritual value.

WHAT IS INDIGENOUS RELIGION?

It has been defined as **TRADITIONAL RELIGIOUS BELIEFS AND PRACTICES OF ZIMBABWEANS**. (RELIGION refers to a system of **beliefs, practices, institutions, and relationships** based on a particular **vision of ultimate reality** that is used by a **community of believers to identify and distinguish itself from other communities**.)

WHO IS A ZIMBABWEAN?

Scholars say a Zimbabwean is one who is *indigenous. born and bred in Africa*, one who inhabits the country of Zimbabwe. However, some are not necessarily born and bred in Zimbabwe, for example, those who are born in the Diaspora (UK, USA, etc). For example the issue of the whites born and bred in Zimbabwe. Are they Zimbabweans? They came through colonialism, but born and bred here. Should they be classified as Africans? For example, Ian Douglas Smith was born in Shurugwi, Zimbabwe. The most important issue is that *there should be a reference to ancestry, physical location may not matter*.

Samkange: generally, a Zimbabwean is one who is black (munhu).

1. **Indigenous:** refers to "traditional" which itself refers to something that is foundational; right at the bottom. It refers to the base; that which is aboriginal. It is something that belongs to the past, but dynamic. It is therefore the past which progresses into the present. It is the past that goes the process of dynamism. This means that it is subject to change. It is versatile. It is the past being felt in the present. It is a heritage; an inheritance from the past. "In the past" has been misconstrued to mean something that is backward, old fashioned and archaic.

Mercy Amba Oduyoye, (1986:57): the term traditional connotes, "a religion that is dying, being replaced by the new with which it is fruitlessly competing, a conservative and conserving religion bearing little relationship to the time". These are judgemental perspectives. However, Indigenous Religions remain vibrant and consequential. *Their view of the world continues to influence the lives of millions of Africans including those who have converted to missionary religions*. *Biras* have been held since time

immemorial. *Biras*: Cleansing ceremonies (2000: National Sports Stadium after the death of Zimbabwean fans at a match pitting Zimbabwe & South Africa).

2. Religion: (The nature of IR): What is religion?

This is difficult to define. The very first problem that we battle with is the question of the term "religion" itself. Africans have no separate field regarded as "religion" in the strictest sense of other societies. It is an imposition on the Zimbabweans. All of life is religious in some way. Items that comprise the definition of IR include Beliefs and Practices, but we can also include religious objects and places, values and morals and religious officials and /or Leaders. No part by itself constitutes the entire meaning of religion. The parts work together to give a complete picture.

Beliefs:- Beliefs show the way people think about the universe and their attitudes towards life itself. There are plenty of belief systems; different categories of belief systems:

- a. *Anthropological beliefs*- these are beliefs that focus on the human beings; their status in the universe and how they regard each other /perceptions of one another, how we regard the superiority of other.
- b. *Soteriological beliefs*- these are beliefs that have to do with salvation. How human beings grope for survival in the case of predicaments like sicknesses and death. How can one be delivered from the pain of this world.
- c. *Cosmological beliefs*- how the world built can be explained. How is the universe structured? The ingredients comprising the world we live in. How did the world come to be what it is today?
- d. *Numinological beliefs*- these are beliefs about the core of existence. There must be a force/causer of whatever we see in the world. This has to do with the superior incomprehensible forces that give direction to the lives of the people.

Practices:- The practices show how people express their beliefs in practical terms. They are symbolic actions/behaviour. These involve African Ritual Practices. They include praying, making sacrifices and offerings, performing ceremonies and rituals, observing various rituals etc. Festivals are also part of the practices. These are occasions when people sing, dance, eat and celebrate a particular occasion or event. Examples of festivals are those that are conducted to:

- i. Mark harvest time,
- ii. Mark the start of the rain season,

- iii. The birth of a child,
- iv. Victories over enemies (National Biras to celebrate the success of the land reform programmes)

Religious Objects and Places:

These cover places and things that are set apart as being holy or sacred. These are not commonly used except for a particular religious purpose. Some are made by people; others are taken in their natural form and set apart for religious purpose. Some belong to private individuals and families while others belong to whole community in a given region. They include places like shrines, sacred hills and mountains, rivers, charms, amulets, masks etc.

Values and Morals:

These deal with the ideas that uphold the life of people in their relationship with one another and the world around them. They cover topics like truth, justice, love, right and wrong, good and evil, beauty, decency, respect for people and property, the keeping of promises and agreements, praise and blame, crime and punishment, the rights and responsibilities of the individual and their community, character, integrity etc. They help people to live with one another, to settle their differences, to maintain peace and harmony, to have a relationship with their environment. There are differences in the values and morals followed by different people in Africa, but many of them are similar. They change as the living conditions of people change, but they always remain a necessity in human life.

Religious Officials and/or Leaders

These are people who conduct religious matters such as ceremonies, sacrifices, formal prayers and divination. They are men and women who know more about religious affairs than other people and are respected by their community. Example: ritual leaders, diviners, medicine men and women, kings/chiefs and rulers, rainmakers etc. They may or may not be paid for their services, but in most cases people give them presents and gifts to show their gratitude. Without these figures religious activities would neither survive nor function properly; much of the religious wisdom of the people will be forgotten. They are specialists in religious matters. They are the human keepers of the religious heritage. They are the essential part of the African Traditional Religion without which it will grind to a halt.

SOURCES OF IRS (Mbiti, p69):

- Rituals, Ceremonies, festivals of the people,
- Shrines, Sacred places, religious objects,
- Art and symbols,
- Music and dance,

- Proverbs, riddles and wise sayings,
- Names of people and places,
- Myths and legends,
- Beliefs and customs,
- All aspects of life.

MISLEADING TERMS (Characteristics in a negative way)

IR is characterised as:

- “Primitive”, meaning that which is old-fashioned, simple, not contemporary, non-conformity. It is seen as so by some religions that prioritise themselves over others. Even among these religions, divisions are also found; some distaste of certain doctrines held by others.
- Savage: this means that which is wild/uncultured/untamed/barbaric/inhuman (inf. Hooliganism).
- Fetishism: this is a term used to refer to charms/armlets. The word *fetish* derives from a Portuguese term “*feticho*” which refers to natural or artificial objects. In some cases inanimate objects, but they can also be animate (with or without life) with mysterious powers. They are believed to breathe and are found on bodies or anywhere in the home.
- Juju Has an element of spiritual power, especial to kill, to steal (incomprehensible tactics employed). It is used to enhance success in sporting activities and even in terms of sexuality, for example, *mubobobo*-used to lure women into sexual contact knowingly or unknowingly. Women also apply juju when jilted by men or when a client defaults payment for sexual services through the transplanting of the male organ. The term is originally from a French word: “doll” or “toy”.
- Paganism- assumes a peasantry mentality; belonging to the “country” or countryside. The peasants are regarded as retrogressive. Paganism and heathenism are synonymous. From a Christian point of view, paganism involves the worship of false gods (strong peasantry mentality).
- Animism: refers to belief in inanimate objects. “Anima”-soul. Scholars maintain that every object has a soul.
- Idolatry: worship of “false” gods. ATRs have been accused of being idolatrous, that is, having a belief in these “false” idols.
- Polytheism- carries the idea of worshipping many gods. ‘Poly’- many and “theist” has

an element of spirituality-god.

- Superstition: portraying that which is evil /satanic.
- The shona have been described as ancestor worshippers, meaning that they take the ancestors to be the end in themselves: Is this wrong?
- Witchdoctor: denotes an element to kill and an element of saving life.

These words have a lot of bias and prejudices. Most of the terms are misleading and must be dropped in the academic study of IR. Scholars propose that there should be devised acceptable substitutes.

IR Worldview

Dualistic and Tripartite Worldviews

Dualistic- Zimbabweans believe there is a spiritual realm (the abode of the spirits). The exact location of this realm is not clear. They are regarded as "*Varikumhepo*." The Shona and Ndebele believe in the existence of the physical realm, that is, the earth with tree animals etc. When one dies, they go to the spirit world.

The Tripartite worldview

It comprises belief in human world, the natural world and the spiritual world. These three worlds are linked. The natural world provides the habitat for the spirits and sends message from the spiritual world to the human world (as hierophanies). The spirit world provides guidance, punishment and blessing to the human world (Haverkort, et al). For the Zimbabwean every plant, animal and natural phenomena are a carrier of the divine. In order to appease the spirit world, people have to perform rituals and make sacrifices. The human world has to relate to both the natural and the spirit world.

The diagram below illustrates the IR Tripartite Worldview:

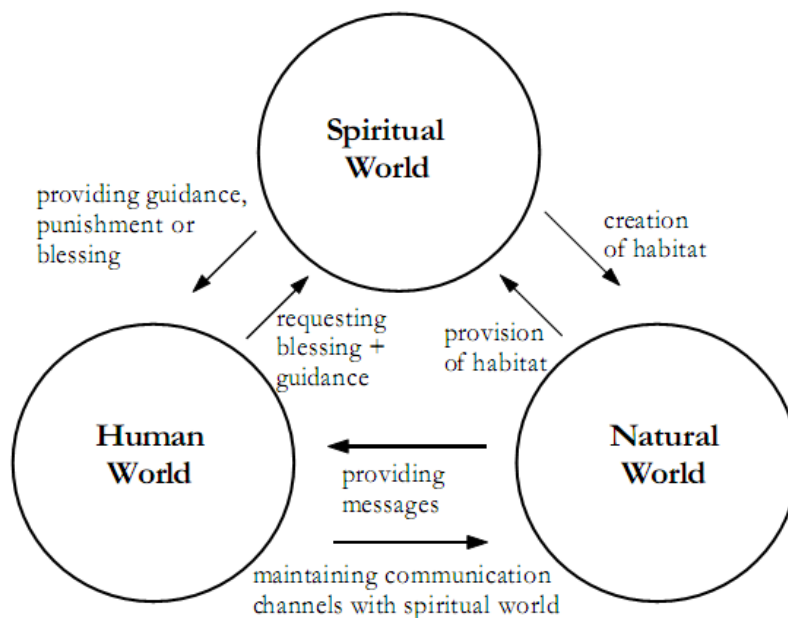


Diagram adapted from Haverkort et al

The IR worldview does not include the idea of the natural cause of misfortunes, death and diseases. There are always some spiritual causes for misfortunes that is why the sacred practitioners are sought to ascertain the cause of illness.

THE CONCEPT OF GOD IN IR

Many European writers, who made a general survey on African tribal beliefs in the past, have described African Religions in their own ways. Many have maintained that God has no place in African tribal Religions, or that belief in God is due to the influence of hierarchical society. Some have said that God in African tribals is nothing more than a glorified Ancestor, or that belief in God is the reflection of the worship of nature, that Africans are Animists, that magic is the mother of African Religions. Others have said that God is believed in, yet, is thought of as so great that no regular worship is offered to Him. These are some of the rash conclusions drawn by those European writers: Anthropologists, Explorers, Civil Servants, Missionaries and so fort. All of them have made too many generalisations. It is clear that, those writers, did not really and truly penetrate and understand African Cultures.

Therefore , from the authentic African point of view , all assertions mentioned above, simply not true since such affirmation are made by people, who have hardly taken pains to study African Religions free from prejudices.

African people are vigorously religious.

1 BELIEF IN GOD

God is known and worshipped all over Zimbabwe. Shona call him **Mwari** and the Ndebele call him **Unkulunkulu** "the Greatest of the Great." . People acknowledge Him as Father, Creator, Eternal, completely Beneficent, ethically Holy, and creatively Omnipotent. John S. Mbiti, in his book African Religions and Philosophy says, "All over Zimbabwe people have a notion of God as the Supreme Being the origin and sustenance of all things." Truly, Zimbabwean peoples

strongly believe in the supreme Being (God). The Supreme Being is believed to be the originator of everything; it is the original source, the beginning of all things. He is the first one to exist. The Shona people refer to God as:

- *Muwanikwa, Mutangakugara, Musiki* Creator of all there is in the world: People, vegetation, animals and the earth itself.
- *Musikavanhu* creator of humanity. Some refer to him as *Muumbi* which is an attribute of creation. It is also expressed in African myths of origins (Cosmogonic myths).

These names are used to argue for the existence of God before the coming of the missionaries. The Shona and the Ndebele had a belief in God that has been passed from one generation to another even before the advent of missionaries.

- *Dzivaguru* refers to a big perennial pool. Supreme Being is believed to sustain his creation through his providence. He provides rains, fertility (land and people) other necessities needed. It underwrites God's ability to provide rain and is used to argue for the **feminine nature of God. (Imagery for a womb- gives rationale for talking about god in feminine terms). Women are the ones who are closely associated with the earth and other sources of livelihood.**
- *Samasimba* He is omnipotent, Omnipresent (ubiquitous, found everywhere) and omniscient (all-knowing).
- Some refer to him as **King**. Shona and Ndebele had traditional leaders/rulers. God rules the universe just as their **rulers rules their territories. They equated this title to God**. He has invincible powers over the universe.
- Some ethnic groups also refer to God as **grandmother/Mbuya**. This is done to express his benevolence/generosity to his creatures. Just like a grandmother is looked at as someone who has had many siblings although some scholars argue that it can be seen **as a conceptual premise used to advance feminist interests; that God is female rather than exclusively male.**
- Chidzachepo- existed from eternity.
- Chirozvamauya / mavi- he gives and takes. Chikara- sovereign and malevolent nature of God.

Zimbabwean knowledge of God is expressed in proverbs, short statements, songs, prayers, names, myths, stories and religious ceremonies. All these are easy to remember and pass on to other people.

Generally, Zimbabwean concepts of God are strongly coloured and influenced by the historical, geographical, social and cultural background or environment of each people. This explains the similarities and differences which we find when we consider the beliefs about God from all over Zimbabwe.

2. THE ETERNAL NATURE OF GOD

All over Zimbabwe find considerable examples of how Zimbabweans conceive of the Eternal Nature of God. A number of societies consider Him to be : Omniscient (Knowing all things), Omnipresent (being everywhere), and Omnipotent (being almighty or all-powerful). These are essential aspects of his Being. They are part of his unique nature and no other being can be described in the same terms. Also Zimbabweans consider God to be Transcendent and Immanent. When Zimbabweans consider God to be Omniscient, they are at the same time confer upon Him the highest possible position of honour and respect. For wisdom commands great respect in Zimbabwean societies. In so doing, people admit that man's wisdom, however great, is limited, incomplete, and acquired. On the other hand, God's Omniscience is absolute, unlimited and intrinsically part of His eternal nature and being. The metaphor of seeing and hearing explains the concepts of God as omniscient in a concrete way. They regard Him as the omniscient from whom nothing is hidden since nothing can escape His vision, hearing and knowledge. God knows everything, observes everything and hears everything without limitation and without exception. This is why Zimbabweans call Him as "the Wise one" or "only God is Wise." They believe that God is "the Discerner of hearts" who sees both the inside and outside of man.

"He is everywhere." This idea comes out from other peoples who say that God is met everywhere, that the presence of God protects people, that wrong - doers cannot escape the judgment of God ; or that God is like the wind or air.

Among many people, one of the names for God describes Him as "the all powerful" or "the Almighty." His power is seen in practical terms. For instance, the Zimbabweans conceive of God's power in political terms, which for such a powerful nation is full of meaning.

God's omnipotence is seen in His exercise of power over nature. God is referred to as "the one who makes the sun set," and when the Shona/ Ndebele make sacrifices and prayers for rain, they address God as the one who makes mountains quake and rivers overflow. The wind, the sun and the rain are beyond human power but not beyond God's power, who works through them and other natural phenomena or objects.

According to the Zimbabwean concept the attribute of God's transcendence must be balanced with that of His immanence, since these two are paradoxically complementary. This means that He is so "far" (transcendental) that man cannot reach Him, yet, He is so "near" (immanent) that He comes close to man. In this way, God is thought of as dwelling far away in the sky, or "above" beyond the reach of men. Practically all African peoples associate God with the sky. Some have myths telling of how men came from the sky or of how God separated from men and withdrew Himself into the sky, whence nobody could directly reach Him.

God transcends all boundaries; He is omnipotent everywhere and at all times. Yet, in spite of all this transcendence of God, He is immanent so that men can and do in fact establish contact with Him. It is, however, in the many acts of worship that men acknowledge God to be near and approachable. Such acts include sacrifices, offerings, prayers and invocations. For most of their life, African peoples place God in the transcendental plane, making it seem as if He is remote from their daily affairs. But they know that He is immanent, being manifested in natural objects and phenomena and they can turn to Him in acts of worship, at any place and time. Concerning the origin of God, a number of African peoples think of Him

as self-existent and pre-eminent. From the Zulu we get a clear expression of this concept. The Shona says that God is "He who is of Himself" or "He who came of Himself into being." They think that God, was the first, who had always been in existence, and would never die .

It is commonly believed that God is spirit, even if in thinking or talking about Him African peoples may often use anthropomorphic images. As far as it is known, there are no images or physical representations of God by African peoples : this being one clear indication that they consider Him to be a Spiritual Being. The fact that He is invisible also leads many to visualize Him as spiritual rather than physical.

In short, this is all about the Eternal nature of God.

We shall now see the four main comprehensive attributes of God below.

ATTRIBUTES OF GOD IN TR

a) GOD IS REAL

Professor Idowu in his book African Traditional Religion says that God is "real" and that is why Zimbabweans call Him by names which are descriptive both of His nature and of His attribute. God's proper names are a further evidence of how He is real to Zimbabweans. In Zimbabwe, God is known as: Unkulunkulu (The Great-Great One), (Creator), Mwari (Supreme being). Besides the names, Zimbabwe is very rich in attributes of God as we have seen above. This shows unmistakably that, to them God is the living one who is the ever-present, ever- active and ever-acting reality, in the World. God is "Spirit of the sky," or "Spirit" who is in the "sky." To them God is so "real" that He is thought of in terms of "a living person," never in the sense that He has a human form, but because He "sees and hears" all that happen. He is the friend of men who helps them in their trouble. Ritual practices also suggest an awareness of a protective presence of God. He is with them because He is spirit: And being like "wind" or "air" is everywhere: And being everywhere, is here and now.

In IR , God is approached even in times of distress and as a last resort when other helps have failed, this proves rather than disproves the fact that, to Zimbabweans, He is there to be approached at any time, and that can only mean that He is "Real" to them.

b) GOD IS UNIQUE

This conception is clearly stated all Zimbabwe. They express in several ways that God is incomparable.

The uniqueness of God is one reason why there are no images of Him in Zimbabwe. In this regard the Zimbabwean concept of God is an emphatic "No one" or "None" to the question : "To whom then will you liken God, or what likeness compare with Him" ? Furthermore, the conception of God as King, the King with absolute supremacy, emphasizes his uniqueness. One of the Shona names for him has the connotation of one who wears the unique crown. According to them, He is the only God : he is not of the rank and file of the divinities and above all, He is not a person in the sense that human beings are. "There is none to equal God : "No matter how great you are.

c) GOD IS THE ABSOLUTE CONTROLLER OF THE UNIVERSE

This is the focal point at which the fact of the reality and uniqueness of God in IR is brought home to us. In a way, the fact of God's control of the universe embraces all that explained and implied above. IR consider God as King and ruler of the universe. God is the absolute controller of the universe. Whatever power or authority there may be, exists in consequence of Him ; because it derives from, Him and because he permits it. "God is the ultimate fountain-head of all power and authority of all sanctions for orderly relations between men." God is the ultimate source of all power and of the moral order. All life and activity, in both material and non-material sense, derives from Him. He created the world and everything in it, including not only human beings, animals, plants, and so on, but spirits also. In addition, He invested the whole universe with a certain non-material kind of power or influence which manifests itself in various ways and on specific occasions in human beings and animals and even in natural phenomena, such as lightning, waterfalls, and mountains. He is the ultimate source and symbol of that power and influence. Placide Temples in his book, Bantu Philosophy, writes : "...God is force, possessing energy in himself; the Mover of all other forces. He knows all forces, their ordering, their dependence, their potential and their mutual interactions. He knows, therefore, the cause of every event. He is the very spirit of the universe. The universe is His. This fact occurs frequently in their thought and prayers. He is far away but at the same time actively and effectively rules the universe and governs human affairs. He is the giver, and naturally, the sustainer of life. He instituted the social order and is its guardian. he does without complaint, and even sees "blessings in adversities." He is the "Supreme being upon whom men lean and do not fall".

God is the absolute controller of all powers. Even divinities owe their being and divine authority to Him.

d) GOD IS ONE, THE ONLY GOD OF THE WHOLE UNIVERSE

This is a significant part of the African concept of God which must be well understood if one is to understand African attitude to life with regard to personal relations. All over Africa, there are places each of which is considered to be a sacred city, a sacred grove, or a sacred spot, especially because it is believed, according to the people's cosmology, that the place is the centre of the world, the place where creation began, where the human race has its cradle, and from where the race dispersed all over the earth.

One important aspect of this topic is found in the African sense of the "justice of God." Justice with particular reference to the social and the moral order. Before God, there is no favourite. He is no respecter of persons; He made each one and all are of equal value before Him. Divinity is made the final judge of right and wrong.... Divinity is the guardian of truth. If a man wishes to be in the right with God, he must be in the right with men. The concept implies also that, while goodness will never miss its reward in blessing, wickedness will not go unpunished.

THE MORAL ATTRIBUTES OF GOD

Concerning the moral attributes of God, many people consider Him to be merciful, showing kindness and taking pity over mankind. For this reason He is referred to as "the God of pity", "God is kind" or "God is merciful". The mercy or kindness of God is felt in situations of danger, difficulty, illness and anxiety. When deliverance or protection is needed God is called upon to help. Even when sorrows have struck, God may be called upon to comfort the people. Speak of Him as "the God of comfort". The majority of African people regard God as essentially good, and there are many situations in which He is credited with doing good to His people. For instance, when averting calamities supplying rain, providing fertility to people, cattle, and fields etc. There are, however, situations when calamities, misfortunes, and sufferings come upon families or individuals, for which there is no explanation. Some societies would then consider these to be brought about by God, generally through agents like spirits or magic workers, or as punishment for contravening certain customs or traditions. Some peoples hold that God is capable of showing anger in the form of death, drought, floods, locusts, and other national calamities. All these are interpreted as the manifestations of His anger. However, a number of African peoples consider God to have a will which governs the universe and the fortunes of mankind. Some consider God to be just, no matter what befalls them. Believe that God is always right. They hold that, "God rewards good to those who follow good conduct, and evil to those who follow evil conduct." Some societies hold that God cannot be charged with any offence since He is above the level of "fault", "failure", "wrong" and "unrighteousness". In their eyes, God is "the pure king" ... who is without blemish

The concept of God's holiness is also indicated from the fact that many African peoples have strict rules in performing rituals addressed to God. Sacrificial animals, for instance, have to be of one sacred colour, and priests, or officiating elders must refrain from sexual intercourse and certain food or activities before and after the ritual. These ritual formalities clearly show that people regard God as holy. As for the love of God, there are practically no direct sayings that God loves. This is something reflected also in the daily lives of African peoples. It is rare to hear people talking about love. A person shows his love for another more through action than through words. In the same way, people experience the love of God in concrete acts and blessings. So they assume that He loves them, otherwise He would not have created them. Moreover, people believe that manifestations of evil, such as sickness, barrenness, death, failure in undertakings and the like, come from malicious human agents, whereas manifestations of good, such as, health, begetting many children, fertility, wealth, and the like, come from God. They are the tokens of His love to mankind. People experience the love of God, even though they do not speak of it as though it were detached from His activities.

To sum up, the concept of God in IR as presented above is only a few glimpses of it. It is, however, in the realm of God's activities that we find the greatest number of examples of what people think and say about God. Moreover, we find other expressions about God in the religious activities; namely, prayers and worship.

EXISTENCE AND FUNCTIONS OF SPIRITS IN IR

The Shona and Ndebele also believe in a plethora of spirits:

- Ancestors (Midzimu),

- Alien Spirits (Mashavi),
- Avenging spirits (Ngozi).

Hierarchy of spirits

- National Spirits-Debatable. It is a political construct.
- Territorial/Tribal/Clan Spirits- spirits of departed rulers/chiefs.
- Family Ancestral Spirits

Ancestral Spirits (Midzimu)

These are the spirits of the deceased members of the family who were decently buried and now exist in spiritual form. Death marks a transformation of the African person from the physical to the spiritual form. Mbiti (1969) calls them the living-dead; whilst they are dead physically, they are alive spiritually. The dead are still part of the family and the living still have memories of them. However, not everyone who dies can achieve ancestor-hood status. There are certain prerequisites/requirements for one to become an ancestral spirit. These are:

- One should be a married person with children. This is done for purposes of continuity; such people had parental responsibility so they have to look after the living using the experience of parental responsibility they gathered in the previous life
- Necessary rituals should be conducted for a person to become an ancestral spirit (kurova guva/umbuyiso). Before these rituals are conducted the spirit is believed to be dangerous to the living. The ritual inaugurates the dead into the spiritual realm,
- Moral uprightness. Anti-social behaviour, for example, witchcraft, sorcery, stealing, social outcasts, mentally deranged, lepers etc cannot become ancestral spirits. In some cases even the immoral become ancestral spirits, but the spirit is believed to have less impact because of the failure to be exemplary in the previous life.

Functions of Ancestral spirits

- They are intermediators /mediators between the people and the Supreme Being. M.F.C, Bourdillon argues that ancestors are bilingual.
 - They speak the language that God hears and the language the living can understand.
 - They know what the people are after since they had been there, and since they are now in the spiritual world, they know best how to approach God,
 - Zimbabweans feel small to approach God directly so the need to use the ancestral spirits as a way to show respect and courtesy towards God who must be approached with humility and reverence.

-An Zimbabwean person does not approach an elder directly, but does so through his junior.

-Ancestral Spirits are always appeased with some ceremonies so as to perform their intermediary role satisfactorily.

- They are protectors and guardians of the people. Zimbabweans believe the world has mysterious forces which beyond humanity conception, for example, evil spirits, natural disasters, sorcerers etc.

- Humanity can only cope with these forces only with the guardianship and security proffered by the ancestral spirits that can wade off these forces that threaten the wellbeing of the living.

- They do not cause harm, but misfortunes happen when they withdraw their protection in protest or as a sign of their anger and the family becomes vulnerable to these forces.

-Rituals are conducted to placate them so that they won't withdraw their protection. They also maintain peace and harmony in the family.

- They fight evil spirits and drive them away from their family descendants where they once belonged. People are united through ceremonies held in their honour. People gather in friendly, peaceful and happy ceremonies to venerate ancestors.
- They influence proper moral behaviour on people; they shape the morality of the people. This is done through the issue of reward and punishment. Those who abide by the restrictions are rewarded and those who break taboos are punished.
- They meet the expectations of people in their everyday life. They ensure fertility both of the land and of the people. When a woman begets child, the ancestors are thanked.
- They protect people at dangerous working places, academic endeavours, good yields/bumper harvests, and marriages (etc) in various enterprises.
- Some are guardians and protectors of the land, for example, territorial spirits. They are believed to guard against foreign invasion/enemies.

Alien Spirits

These are spirits of strangers/aliens who died away from home and usually are the spirits of the young and the unmarried. The spirits of these people would not have received proper funeral ceremonies; hence they seek to express themselves through taking possession of unrelated people. They are unknown to the communities from which they choose hosts.

Some of these spirits are spirits of social outcasts/devianees, for example, witches, sorcerers, suicide victims, the mentally deranged etc. They cannot be adopted into the world of ancestral spirits and so end up possessing unrelated people. They can also be spirits of animals, for example, baboons, snakes etc. The hosts behave in the way the animal does. The *shavi* cult is a quest for recognition. It is a struggle against oblivion caused by death. Since they cannot be ancestral spirits, they have to be somewhere.

Example:

- *Mazungu* spirit- these are spirits African people from Portuguese east Africa. They came many years ago in search of some minerals and game and many died in these strange lands and their spirits wandered until they settled on some alien hosts. The spirit is associated with cleanliness and hygiene. Many reflect a bias picture of white people. The host behaves in the way the whites do. A woman host washes her body and clothes regularly. The person is always spotlessly clean. The spirit demands western food stuff such as eggs, rice spaghetti etc. The possessed speaks English and any other European languages even if the person has never been to School.

The significance

They confer particular talents/skills to their hosts either negative or positive.

Positive Skills/Talents

- They can confer hunting talents to their host. One can become an expert in hunting. The host is known as "*Mudzimba*". Such type of spirits possesses "men" for example, Khumalo Shavi.
- They bestow healing talents, for example, Sivinda Shavi. This type is popular with women. The host is able to treat various diseases, convulsions, difficult labour etc. They impart this expertise to their host.
- *Madzukwa Shavi* expert in treating many diseases some of the western medicine cannot treat, for example, leprosy, epilepsy etc.
- *Chipunha* favours young and unmarried women as its host. It confers curative skills on its host. It cures diseases that attack small children.
- *Nyamande Shavi*- Confers divinatory talents. The host can foresee into the future and may warn a person of an impending disaster and advises the person of the diviner to consult to avert the disaster. The Baboon spirit can divine illness. It can also help find lost property, something hidden (Seership).
- *Masangano Spirit* specialises in dancing. It can confer dancing skills on the host and the person can entertain people at ceremonies (for example, Chakandiwana in *Garandichauya*).
- *Zvipenzi Shavi* enables host to perform duties regarded arduous to perform under normal circumstances. The person is industrious / hardworking.

- *Shavi reMhondoro* is known to possess lions. The lion guards the chieftom by moving around at night.
- *Sangoma* produces warriors strong and brave in battles. It confers the ability to kill in battle and protects the whole territory from invaders or enemies. The spirit can also provide entertainment.

Possession by alien spirits enhances the social status of the host in the society. I.M Lewis posits that the favourite victims of possession cults are women who are deprived of power in male dominated societies (patriarchy) or down-trodden categories of men. These two groups are subject to strong discrimination in rigidly stratified societies. Possession avails the chance for them to express the inclination they may not under normal circumstances.

Negative Qualities/Attributes

- *Shavi rouroyi*- Witchcraft: for example, *Mzilikazi Shavi*,
- *Shavi rechipfambi*- Prostitution,
- *Shavi reumbavha*- Stealing,
- *Shavi reusimbe*- laziness,
- *Shavi reurombe*- Vagrance / poverty.

Avenging Spirit

This is a spirit of someone who dies with a grievance and comes back to seek revenge against those who wronged it. It is the most feared type of spirit among the Shona/Ndebele because it causes illness, misfortunes, suffering and even death to the offender's family. The etymology of the word "*ngozi*" is a Karanga term "*njodzi*" which means accidents, sorrows, danger to human life, misfortune etc. The term is characteristic of the actions of the spirit. It attacks the members of the family of the offender because in the African society in general sin is seen as a collective social error and the whole family is susceptible to punishment.

Various types of avenging spirits

- Murdered persons, especially a foreigner/*mutorwa*. The spirit comes back to seek revenge,
- Parental spirit against its offspring. This could be due to ill treatment during life-time. If a child beats up or scolds one of her parents and takes no steps to remedy the situation through striking reconciliation, the spirit of the parent comes back as an avenging spirit. *It is not necessarily a ngozi, but "kupfuka"*. The misfortunes are directed to the specific child who wronged the parent. She may come back as result of tampering with her cooking utensils. These should be replaced while she is still alive otherwise she may die with a grievance. Non-payment of "*mombe youmai*" by the son-in-law can court the spirit of the deceased mother. The mother's spirit is more dangerous than that of the father because the mother is not of one's relations;

not of the same totem. Children can perform rituals to placate her. The victim goes through a humiliating life that includes withdrawing into the outside world (*Kutanda botso*). May cause fertility problems in the girl children.

- The most dreaded one is the avenging spirit of a deceased pregnant woman or a woman who dies soon after giving birth as a result of the in-law or husband. It has a tendency of quantifying itself by causing or calling other "ngozi" into the family of the offender.
- Spirit of a servant (*Mushandi*) / slave (*Nhapwa*) can also come back to seek compensation, especially when they died without being paid their dues. If the person was ill-treated, they may come seeking revenge. It demands a wife/virgin girl as a form of compensation.
- A spirit of a spouse/ partner who died through negligence of or ill-treatment or unfaithfulness of the other partner.

An avenging spirit can be self-generative. This means that it can come without being provoked. But it can also be initiated. The relatives of the deceased can invoke the deceased's spirit. They can use herbs at the deceased's grave to make the person wreak havoc in the family of the offender. Some people take medicine while still alive to be able to take revenge if their death is caused by people.

People take steps to get rid of the avenging spirit, for example,

- "*Kurasira*". A black animal or fowl dedicated to an avenging spirit (ngozi) is left to wander in the bush. One who takes away the animal automatically takes the "ngozi",
- "*Kutsipika*" This is a ritual that is meant to drive away the spirit with the help of a *n'anga* without propitiatory rites being done. The step may threaten even the life of the *n'anga* because it incurs the anger of the spirit. This is not a permanent solution to counter *ngozi*. The only solution is reparation/compensation. This is aptly described in the Shona adage that "*Mushonga wengozi kuripa*." The victim family consult a *n'anga* for appropriate measures to take to appease the avenging spirit. The spirit may require beer, wife, cattle etc.

Some scholars, for example, M. Gelfand, noted that these spirits are significant because it acts as an ethical code of conduct. It is a strong deterrent to crime. A person should desist from engaging in life threatening action. The fear compels people to respect human value. Stern punishment for taking one's life: there is justice even beyond the grave. The avenging spirits are agents of social justice. Even ancestral spirits cannot protect their own; they turn their backs because they are keen to see justice done. However, these avenging spirits also militate against the rights of other people. For example, the use of a girl as a wife for the spirit as compensation/propitiatory fine to placate the spirit infringes on the rights of the girl child. The individual is denied the right to choose their partner. Marriage rights are violated. This causes animosity, disunity etc.

TOTEMS AND INDIGENOUS IDENTITIES

What is it?

It is the belief that people are discerned from animals, plants and other natural objects.

-these natural objects are symbolized as totems which are associated with clans/groups of families with common descent (ancestry)

-however, Shona culture's doesn't believe that people necessarily originate from animals and other objects but they identify themselves with certain animal species for the purpose of social identity.

-Totemism happens to be as old as Shona culture itself.

-A clan lives on large extended family with its members sharing certain duties and obligations. each clan has its own totem usually animal and animal body parts, the totem acts as a symbol.

-the totem is the emblem of the clan as Durkein puts it ' it is its flag I, it's the sign by which its clan distinguish itself from others'

-Durklein noted that a totem is more than a mere symbol it is rather a religious, sacred symbol.

-Shona society is divided into multiplicity of clans and sub-clans which distinguishes themselves from each other on the basis of totems.

-these use at least 25 idendifiable totems Shona society with at least 65 praise

names

-the totems include:

shoko, moyo, shava, ngara, gumbo, tsivo-gushungo , gwayi, mbizi. Nzou, Shumba, bonga, nyati, dziva, nheta, beta, garwe, mbeva, mbano, mhembwe, nguruve/humba, shiri, mhara, mhari, mvuu e.tc

Shoko/soko has 6 praise names, mukanya, bvudzijena, wachemuka, murehwa, mutadza, Gumere, mudyavevana

-praise names are used to identify a sub-clan

-Moyo, tsivo and Gumbo are not animals but organs of animals.

WHY ADOPTING TOTEMS?

-it is difficult to explain why the shona people adopted totems, however, from our observations about the functions of totems we can hypothesize.

-it appears totems were a strategy of survival

-it seems from his origin man has drawn inspiration for survival from nature-in any case man is dependent on nature for survival e.g. Food., shelter, clothing, medicine

-man find all solutions to problems from nature

-with the increase in population there was need to have social identity, we saw that the animal kingdom is made up of distinct species of animals others very aggressive and others friendly and others simply shy.

-it may be because of this that the earliest ancestors decided to adopt certain animals as their totems in order to represent the social differentiation that was taking place in their society and they were increasing in numbers.

-particular animals were chosen as totems because of certain attributes which they possessed.

-the attributes were found to be very useful if imitated by human beings

-these attributes made human society more stable and organized to achieve their daily needs e.g monkeys live as a group which translate into a clan/family. Monkeys care for each other and they fight to protect members of their group.

-monkeys have a clear social structure where the younger ones respect the elders

-elephants represent strength i.e the clan is against laziness

FUNCTION OF TOTEMS

1. They are the basis of social identity. They don't only identify people socially but also historically and culturally. e.g. the study of Shona totems is an avenue in knowing and approximating Shona history and culture.

2. Totems are important in a society because they are the basis for solidarity and unity. People of the same totem are basically relatives who share a common ancestry. As a result they always see each other as one.

3. they have a religious function. the belief in totemism emphasis some of the central traits of religion e.g. amongst the Shona totemism is one of the fundamental pillars of their religion. we use totems and praise names to communicate to mwari and the departed ones (family spirits)

4. Totemism is an important basis for socialization not only among man but also between man and women. Totemism regulates gender relations. each and every individual through totemic identity is given a particular social position which is respected by members of his / her clan as well as members of other clans.

5. Totems also regulate marriage. Most Shona people are EXOGAMOUS. A woman can only marry into a different clan where she will be considered Mutorwa .

6. totemism plays an important role in the solving of conflict. In Shona society when people of the same totem wrong each other they are persuaded to forgive each other because they are children of the same clan.- similarly people of different totems are persuaded to solve their differences because of fear of ngozi.

7. Totems also serve as the basis for dividing roles and responsibilities to members of different clans. People negotiate their roles through totems.

8. Totems also regulate the environment. hunting is regulated by clans they do not hunt or eat their totems

TOTEMISM IN CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY

-As knowledge from totemism is fast losing its significance although Shona people still identify themselves using totems. -some of the important rituals and beliefs associated with totems have been abandoned -all cultural values are found in totems -totemism is a package of values

-it appears that today totemism is a symbol that has been emptied of its contents due to the encroachment and embrace of western cultural values by Africans. - totemism is an important aspect of Shona religious beliefs when Christian missionaries came they denigrated African religious beliefs branding them paganist practices. -with many Africans converting to Christianity with the passage of time the significance of totemism begun to decline -cases of people with the same totem who marry each other are on the rise. -elite Africans and their children have totally lost knowledge about totemism and their cultural values in general -increased

physical mobility among Africans means that many have moved from their traditional homes to go to mining and commercial farm areas and cities as they seek employment. -Africans no longer identify themselves with their clans -Prostitution, men who indulge in prostitution do not bother to ask about the prostitute's totem -in spite of the impact of western culture totemism to some extent is still being celebrated.

WAYS OF COMMUNICATING WITH THE SPIRITS

In IR people communicate with the spirits in different ways namely,

When they perform

1 KUROVA GUYA CEREMONY/MAGADZIRO

{SETTLING THE DECEASED'S SPIRIT}

The ceremony is known by different names among the Shona sub- cultural groups e.g karanga—magadziro,kugadzira mudzimu, Zezuru- kurova guya (to beat the grave),korekore kutamba mudzimu, kutora mudzimu or bona.

-Some rites may differ here and there but the function of ritual is the same i.e to invite the spirit of the deceased into the family.

- It takes place a year after burial

-When a person dies the Shona believe that the spirit of the deceased wanders in the wilderness awaiting the kurova guya ceremony.

-The ceremony is held during the dry season (August) dry season=religious and social activities.

PROCEDURES TO BE TAKEN IN THE KUROVA GUYA CEREMONY

-The rituals differ from place to place and region to region.

- They consult a n'anga to find out the procedure they should take. (Communication with the spirits)

- Consulting a n'anga is done to make sure that the ritual will be performed in a way that is acceptable to the spirit.

-From this stage all the steps will be done with consultation with the deceased's spirit.

-the ritual should have the approval of the family spirits.

-if one wants to marry there should be consultation. (communication with the spirits)

-Millet beer will be brewed by elderly woman who are beyond child bearing stage with no sexual relations(kupedza Ura)

-she will be helped by the small boys and girls (pre pubescent boys and girls)

-members of the family are advised not to have conflict when preparing for the ceremony.

-On the evening before the ceremony the beer is consecrated to the spirit of the deceased by the eldest member of the family.

-The consecration marks an all night celebration that involves singing and dancing in honour of the spirit.

-Music is important because it enables communication between the living and the dead person.

-The next morning involves rite of inviting the spirit from the grave.

-This rite varies from area to area

-In some areas porridge and beer are poured on the front of the grave to invite the spirit.

-The elder member of the family who will be leading will speak to the deceased asking the spirit to accept the invitation to come home.(communication with the spirits)

-after this , the entourage return home to dance and feast

-sometimes the spirit is symbolizing brought home.

-among the Karanga people there is need to get the grave early in the morning the spirit is invited by members of the family by pouring water on the back of a goat addressing the spirit of the deceased to come home.

- if the spirit accepts the invitation the goat would shake its body vigorously.

-The goat is slaughtered and the meat is roasted and eaten without salt.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE CEREMONY

1. It brings hope and confidence into the family considering the unpredictability of the spirit of the deceased. 2. It marks the end of mourning in the homestead which is referred to as musha mutema The widow will no longer veil her head with black cloth or wear the symbolic black dress of mourning – return to mourning.

3. It resolves problems and tensions caused by death by the spirit of the deceased among the family's spirit guardians. The living and the dead would have

restrengthened their cowardice relationship. 4. It allows one of the most important rituals in Shona culture to take place i.e. inheritance ceremony "NHAKA" 5. from a general point of view the ceremony celebrates shona religious practices and communities and re unites the people to the fundamental tradition of their culture 6. it strengthens relationship – ties as both close and distant relatives converge at one place for a common purpose. So it reaffirms social ties. CHANGE- the ceremony has been replaced by memorial service- Christianity.

Besides, they also communicate through,

2 RAINMAKING CEREMONIES

Rain-making ritual is part of the agricultural rites. Among the Shona people it was closely connected to the notion of ancestral spirits.

In IR they believe in rainmaking ceremoniels.

-They believe in their supernatural powers and for the process of rainmaking they depend on RAIN SPIRITS and their TRIBAL or SPIRITS (e.g Ungwali) amongst the Ndebele people)

-The year they perform some rainmaking ceremonies which are known by different names in the different areas e.g. mukwerera.ukuphehla.izulu,makasva(manyika0,rukato (korekore),

-Reminding them the spiritual hierarchy –MWARI,UNKULUNKULU- Tribal spirits – clan spirits family spirits

-The mhondoro speaks through their medium and they are prophets who foresee the future and every children should have its own tribal or territorial spirit who meddle between the living and the spiritual world.

-In the times of drought the Chief should summon the rain priests or the tribal spirits to hold the rain making rituals.

Although many people within that rain making rituals are carried out during the time of drought in actual fact these ritual should be carried out every year.

THE RAIN MAKING PRACTICES

-the rain making rituals are out of single event

-In some cases a domestic animal will be slaughtered and all night ceremony will be

held were they will be dancing and spirit possession

-special rain dances and music will be sung

-the place where this ceremony and ritual will be carried out differs.

-e.g. specific trees should be selected on the periphery of the village egg muhacha or mukamba.

-amongst the manyika it will be held on a sacred mountain

-lots of beer will be left at creek trees and sacred mountains for the spirits to drink.

-dance and song are an important vehicle of communication between the living and spiritual world.

-the rainmaking ceremony includes sexual songs and sexual initiative dances as a symbolic way of seducing the ancestors to release the rain. – There is a lot of symbolism which include fertility, manhood, semen and wetness etc.

-other ceremonies include the FIRST FRUITS CEREMONY (usually held in January/February) and HARVEST CEREMONY (April/May)

3 (KUPEMBEDZA MASHAVI)

It was widely believed in the Indigenous religion that when the shade spirit selects its host and if the host recognized and accepted the shade a ritual action took place in order for the spirit to operate in harmony with its host. The medium recognized the shade since some of these brought skills and abilities in all forms of life (Bourdillon1990).

4 TRADITIONAL HEALERS (N'ANGA)

Among the Shona people the traditional healer is known as N'anga. Gelfand (1959:99) defines n'anga as an intermediary between ancestral spirits vadzimu and the living members of the family. In this respect the position of the n'anga vi-a-vis the family is equivalent to the position of the medium(svikiro) of the tribal spirit (teteguru) vi-a-vis tribe.

They are spiritual consultants endowed with extra ordinary knowledge; they are guardians of esoteric knowledge (beyond the ordinary). They preside over most

traditional rituals offering guidance for the proper execution of rituals.

The n'anga is consulted during family sickness or when there is an ordeal like that of witch hunting, or exorcising the avenging spirit. The true n'anga is endowed with the power of healing and divining the cause of an illness or indeed of any difficulty by means of the spirit of an ancestor who was also a n'anga during his life time.

• Because ATRs do not have written scripture of their own they are not concerned about orthodoxy (RIGHT BELIEF), they put more emphasis on orthopraxis (RIGHT ACTION). Knowledge is collected and stored in the memory of Africans. Traditional healers are the Reserve section of ATR. They are the intellectual hub; champions of orthopraxis: Burial-time of taking the body to the grave, and that of cutting the R u p a s a etc. During k u r o v a g u v a ceremony consultancy services are sought from the n'anga

5 Spirit Mediums (Masvikiro)

They are possessed by the spirit of those who died long back. They are induced by ecstasy and could speak in the accent of the deceased

6 Spirit Possession (Kusvikirwa)

Music and dance makes one to be spiritually possessed. Once in this state communication begins

SYMBOLISM IN IR

WHAT ARE SYMBOLS IN IR

Symbols represent the most superficial and value the deepest manifestations of culture, with heroes and rituals in between.

Symbols are words, gestures, pictures, or objects that carry a particular meaning which is only recognized by those who share a particular culture. New symbols easily develop, old ones disappear. Symbols from one particular group are regularly copied by others. This is why symbols represent the outermost layer of a culture.

SYMBOLS IN IR

1 Kitchen

Most of the rituals are performed in the kitchen. Body of the deceased awaiting burial will be in the kitchen. Cooking is done in the kitchen. Its also a meeting place. Payment of lobola is done in the kitchen. In the kitchen thats where we find chikuva which is an important asset in IR. When a woman dies , the kitchen continue to be used because once closed its believed that they would have locked in the ancestors (kuvharira vadzimu)

2 Reed mat

People perform rituals while sitting on a reed mat. On burial the coffin is put on a reed mat in the grave and some people are buried in a reed mat

3 Rusero

Food preparation is done in rusero. The same applies to medicine prep

4 Tsvimbo

A king rules with a tsvimbo. On inheritance, the one to take of the deceased family is given a tsvimbo

5 Mukombe

LIFE AFTER DEATH

'Is there life after death in IR?' and 'where is the abode of the dead?'

In IR, there is a common belief that death does not mark the end of one's existence , rather it ushers the dead into another realm of existence. Thus the funeral rites performed at one's death serve as some kind of rites of passage. In this case after death , one can continue being active in the lives of the living as an ancestor or the 'living dead' as Mbiti calls the living dead

For the Shona/ Ndebele, death is the 'graduation ' or a change of status as one moves from childhood to ancestorhood. Thus after one's death , rituals are performed at one 's death to ensure that the spirit of the dead is welcomed into the respected categories of fully achieved ancestors in the spirit world. For example

among the Shona the Kurova guva (Bringing the spirit home) ceremony is performed after a year or more of one's death. It is the most important of all funerary rites (Bourdillon, 1973). This ceremony is performed when there is a mature person who would have died in the family and a year has passed after the death. The belief which is widely held among the Shona is that after the death of a person, his or her spirit is not buried together with the body but hovers around in the bush until the welcoming home ceremony is performed. Prior to this ritual the spirit is believed to be dangerous. The way in which this ritual is performed differs from one area to the other.

After agreeing on the day on which the ceremony is to be held, the family of the deceased consult a traditional diviner for the purpose of finding out how this ceremony is to be held and whether they have the blessing of the ancestors. After getting the assurance they then proceed to make the necessary preparations, most important is brewing of beer. On the day of the ritual relatives and non-relatives of the deceased spent the whole night celebrating the life of the deceased through song, dance etc. In the morning a procession is made to the grave of the deceased. The *sahwira* or *muzukuru* of the deceased approaches the grave to find out if the grave has not been burnt (in Shona it is known as *Kupisa guva*) If an anthill is seen on the grave then it is full evidence that somebody from the deceased family has done something that angered the spirit of the deceased and warrants correction (in most cases the wife, husband and children of the deceased were discouraged from engaging in sexual relationships before the ceremony was held) The implication is that the spirit is not happy and if the culprit doesn't pay a fine usually an ox the spirit can nullify the whole ceremony and people have to start all over again. In the event that the grave has not been burnt, the spirit is then welcomed home. Beer is poured on the grave in a bid to quench the thirst of the deceased. As the people return from the grave they symbolically bring back the spirit home

On getting to the homestead those of the nearest of kin gather in the kitchen and address the spirit after which beer is given to people to celebrate the coming home of the spirit. A beast, usually an ox is killed by the deceased's sons-in-law. In Shona it is known as *nyama yepfungaidzo* (meat to be offered to the spirit and usually it is eaten without salt) It is believed that if salt is used the spirit may cause trouble in the family (Magava 1973) The inheritance ceremony then follows and the first born son of the deceased is ritually given the name of his father. The spirit is then told that he is being named on his son. Traditionally the deceased's spear and knobkerrie were given to this son to symbolize that the son has inherited the name of his father. The son automatically takes the responsibility of his father's family. However, traditionally his mother remained free to choose a husband from her husband's relatives i.e. brothers and nephews. Traditionally if she didn't want any of these she could choose her son to be responsible over her life. However the two would not have sexual relations. This practice of *kugara nhaka* has since diminished due to the improvement of the socio-economic status of women and HIV and AIDS

pandemic

NATURE OF MEDIUMSHIP

MEDIUM

It is a host for spirits of different categories. It is believed spirits must find a host or medium in which to establish 'a haven and through which to reveal its wants and advice. Usually the selected medium becomes ill and only gradually realises what has befallen him. He may only start to dream or the illness and dreams may be simultaneous. The nature of the illness is eventually recognised by a n'anga and once the medium accepts the spirit and agrees to carry out the ritual requirements, such as the wearing of special clothes on ceremonial occasions, the host recovers. Thereafter the spirit enters him when called upon to do so or when it wants to reveal a message to others. The usual Shona term to denote a medium is svikiro. Strictly speaking, this word refers to the medium of the mhondoro, but is commonly employed for the medium of the mudzimu (family spirit). Among the Vakaranga the term mhondoro is not used for a tutelary spirit, but instead the word svikiro, although it strictly refers to the "medium and not the spirit itself. Others sometimes use the word mudzimu (family spirit) for the tribal spirit, whilst among the Vakaranga the svikiro of the mudzimu is referred to as valele (paternal aunt). I have not often heard the term used in this connexion. As I have already mentioned, a nganga is the person who becomes endowed with the good spirit of healing and divination and this, in my eyes, is a medium. Similarly, I consider the muroyi the medium for an evil spirit which has human destruction or anti-social acts as its object. Each of these mediums may become possessed with their spirits at any moment even though possession may occur rarely. The medium is the servant of its spirit and must always be ready to serve its purpose. In the case of the tribal medium (mhondoro) or family medium (mhondoro or mudzimu mudiki wapamusha) possession has a special reason such as incest or the misbehaviour of one member of the family towards another. In this instance the spirit often enters the medium in the early hours of the morning. He is heard emitting noises which waken others who hurry into the hut to see what is happening. Then the spirit speaks through its host and explains the reason for its concern. Each of the mediums has its own favoured method of inducing possession and the speed and constancy with which it occurs in the different mediums vary greatly. For instance in the male n'anga possession usually occurs as soon as he starts throwing his hakata (divining bones). Thus it is the divining spirit which turns the hakata in the air causing them to fall in such a way as to reveal the spirit's message. But in those nganga who divine only through their spirits and not with the aid of hahala, possession may take several minutes and has to be induced by music. Depossession of the medium usually takes place as soon as there is no further need for the spirit to be consulted or for it to address the people. The loss of the spirit may be accompanied by great physical effort and even exhaustion. Care has to be taken when such efforts occur. It may be necessary for

someone to stand by and pour water on the convulsive muscles of the medium' as he becomes depossessed (Fig. 7). But in the nganga for instance, depossession may be instantaneous and hardly noticeable. The more experienced the medium, the less is he disturbed as the spirit leaves. One tribal medium whom I observed, started to wave his arms like a bird in flight whenever the spirit left him. In conclusion I would like to call attention to a very significant element in Shona belief. As may be seen from the account just given, there is a strange inter-dependence of the living on the spirits and of the spirits on the living. For those in this world life is incomplete, unproductive and dangerous without contact with the spirits. Spirit life, too, is incomplete without contact with the living.

MEDIUM SHIP AND POLITICS

According to Mbiti- religion permeates all aspects of life (an African is notoriously religious). An African takes his religion to Parliament. In traditional society, religion is politics and politics is religion.

Afe Adogame (Nigeria): In Africa we see the religionization of politics and the politicization of religion. In traditional Society, religious functionaries are "Kingmakers". The onus is upon the sacred practitioners (particularly "M a s vikir o ") to make kings in terms of promoting a religious ideology. Their sole mandate is to identify the King or Chief with ancestral revelations. Ancestral revelations are sacred oracles. "Thus say the ancestors...A or B should inherit power". Politics: Art of claiming and maintaining power; the craft of making impossible possible. In cases of rivalry for power the sacred oracle is consulted to solve the situation. It consulted through dreams or possession (trance) and make proclamation: for example, they may say-"the ancestors have chosen X to be the leader. Most people are not able to confirm or deny what the oracle has said.

The colonial state always sought to co-opt the traditional religious and political leaders to its side; in particular chiefs became salaried officials of the state. Some, however, resisted, for example, Chief Re kai Tangwena (conferred with hero status). Nationalists and their armed wings (ZANU and ZANLA and ZAPU and ZIPRA) often condemned chiefs as sell-outs. ZANLA forces executed many chiefs for allegations of having sold out the struggle (Guns and Rain).

From 1980 there was the rehabilitation of chiefs in Zimbabwe and were co-opted into structures of the ruling nationalists and they became agents for the preservation of culture, particular through the instrument of the Chief's Council (2000 -to the third Chimurenga) under the leadership of Chief Jonathan Mangwende). On 2002 Presidential elections the chiefs unambiguously, articulately and with verve declared

Mugabe as having been chosen by the ancestral revelations to continue to be the president of Zimbabwe. In 2010 Chiefs at Kariba retreat unanimously agreed to confer Mugabe with a life president status- they had a traditional understanding of leadership. Traditionally a chief is not removable from power till death, a situation associated with President Robert Mugabe, hailed by his supporters as 'King', 'Moses' or 'Messiah' (T. Shoko).

The Land question was packaged in religious terms. African Traditional Religion resurged when land reform was gathering momentum. There was a national retreat from Christianity; the period experienced the repackaging of ATR. The survival of ATR to larger extent depends on African politicians. They are willing to re-appropriate ATRs.

In 2003 there was the emergence of urban resistance to nationalist politics. From the 1990s there was a massive shift of support from ZANU PF to opposition politics, MDC in particular. The ruling party's response was to close off all the rural areas as "prestine sacred space" (Mugabe, Inside the Third Chimurenga). He called the Mbare residents "totemless people bought with grains of sugar by Blair". Chiefs became approved allies of the state/ ruling party/government (difficult to separate in Zimbabwe). This was to ensure that opposition parties would not hold their rallies in rural areas.

Three things happened:

1. Chiefs began to be paid salaries (guardians of ancestral revelations) higher than those of the war veterans and other professionals.
2. Electrification of homes: The programmes began at the Chiefs' home,
3. Parcelling out of Vehicles: B1800.

State authorities preside over the enthronement ceremonies (Dr Chombo's Ministry). There is the involvement of the D.A in choosing chiefs- this is intended to ensure that the state has its stake in the operations of these figures. The Chiefs were to endorse the agenda of the state.

National Biras: Religious Innovation?

Bira- ceremony: Usually for household/domestic level. Bira concept- heritage from the past. (Bira- k u y a m b u k a ; moving from the world of physical objects to a spiritual world). However, September 2005 marked the magnification of the Bira for the national agenda-consolidation of the land reform programme (Chikowore: Chronicle 31.10.2005 "As it was, we will always be").

Purpose?

Thanksgiving for success stories in different spheres of life (2005-2006 agricultural

season bumper harvest in most parts of Zimbabwe was attributed to the national Bira).

The current exhumation of the bodies in Mashona land Central, that are purported to be the remains of the fallen heroes of the liberation struggle of the late 1970s for decent burial according to the religious beliefs of the Africans, is another area where the appropriation of ATR to national level is witnessed. However, critics of the programme dismiss this as cheap politicking ;politics of the dead body.

Ritual visits to countries that harbour there main so f the fallen heroes, for example to sites in Mozambique such as Chimoio, Nyadzonya, Chibawa and to Zambia to sites such as FreedomCamp,Nampundwe,Mkushi,Mulungushi,Kabanga, Kavalamanja,Sinde,Solwezi etc.

Problem:

Who presides over these ceremonies and what words are uttered and to which ancestors are they addressed? Do we have a single ancestor? Is it the appropriation of ATR to the national level? ATR and ethnicity-are the spirits of Mbuya Nehanda and Chaminuka influential outside their territories of origin?

MARRIAGE INSTITUTIONS

Marriage is known as matrimony. It is a socially and ritually recognised union or legal marriage contract between two individuals

Initiation is a preparation for marriage. Marriage is viewed as a sacred duty which every normal person must perform. Failure to do some and stopping the flow of life through the individual resulting in the diminishing of mankind upon the earth. Those who seek to evade the duty commit a major offence against society and people will be against them. People who don't get married are regarded as social outcasts e.g tsvimborume or mbongorori this is usually explained as a misfortune or caused by evil sprits e.g ane chitsinha/Chinzvi.

Some rituals are done to combat the evil spirits suspected of standing in the way of the evader marriage is the meeting point for the three layers of human life in Indigenous religion: these are the d e p a r t e d , the livin g and u n b o r n . The departed are the roots on whom the living stand. The living are the link between death and life and the unborn are the buds in the loins of the living and marriage ensures their germination. Failure to get married means that one is cutting off the vital link between death and life. Through marriage the effects of death are reduced and neutralized. Marriage and childbearing are medicine against death. It is the only means of human survival and that being the case, marriage is a religious obligation. Marriage is at the very centre of human of human existence.

It is the custom in some areas for the wife or both wife and husband to be secluded

for several days after the initial wedding. The seclusion in the house, followed by exposure to the public afterwards, is a symbolic way of showing that the couple is being born into a new life; that they are coming out of the womb (of the house). Their 'birth' into married status is greeted with jubilation. Rituals and ceremonies accompany or follow the occasion of the wedding. The aim is to pray for welfare of the new couple, to bless them so that they will bear children and to give them instructions and rules on how to conduct themselves as married people. At these rituals the living dead of the family are called upon to witness the occasion and to give their blessings to the new husband and wife.

≠At this juncture ,it is important to establish how this marriages were formed and how they functioned-

-marriages have varieties of forms, right and customs in different parts of the country. The procedures for getting married vary widely.

NB the marriage is essentially A CONTRACT BETWEEN TWO FAMILIES. A marriage is not a contract between two people (Bourdillion 1987,40) , people marry into families and thus marriage becomes a family affair and not an affair of two individuals

QUESTION:Why do we regard marriage as a contract between two families.

-Tezvara is a tezvara to the whole of the groom's family.

-people usually say we have married such and such a family

-negotiations for marriage require participation by senior representatives of each family.

PROCEDURES THAT ARE FOLLOWED

The process of marriage varies with status, region and cultural beliefs. Normal procedures of marriage are as follows; it all begins with informal courting which can also involve private engagement i.e. the exchange of love tokens (nduma) between the agreed parties. The love tokens included the pieces of under clothing from the girl

-This has largely been replaced by public agreement where engagement rings will be exchanged.

-This will be followed by the formal and public engagement in this case the suitor approaches the girl's family through a messenger that is munyai with some gifts.

-The bride price is then negotiated and paid but not in full

-mukusha should remain in debt.

- Terms included in the bride price include rutsambo, mombe yehumai, roora

-Rutsambo was associated with sexual rights and was only paid for virgins.

Roora was paid in the form of cattle; this gave the husband rights over children born to the woman

-Mombe yehumai –cow of motherhood was committed to the matrilineal ancestors

-The bride price should not be equated to other transactions e.g buying a home or a car

- the wife is not a supply bought as property or a slave who might be bought and sold again

-the husband's family may not pass her on to a third family

-in the case of divorce she must be officially returned to her kin.

OTHER TRADITIONAL FORMS OF MARRIAGE

1. Elopement i.e kutizira
2. child marriage i.e kuzvarira/kuzvarirwa
3. service marriage i.e kutema ugariri
4. church marriage i.e this was borrowed from the European marriage customs
5. court marriages i.e this was borrowed from the European marriage customs

*Musenga bere

*Kukumbira

*Kutema Ugariri/ Service Marriage

*Kuzvarira / Child marriage

*Chimutsa mapfihwa

*Kubatira

EXPLAIN THE ABOVE TYPES OF MARRIAGE

NB-This institution has largely been affected by the Western culture and the conversion of African people into Western religions like Christianity- How? Lesbians and Gays and also dedicated brothers and sisters in the case of Catholics

DIVORCE

According to Mbiti (1965) Divorce is a delicate accident in marital relationship

Marriage as discussed earlier involves many people , it is a community activity and not just any activity of the husband and the wife.

Thus it is extremeluy difficult to dissolve it

If dissolution does come about , then it creates a greater soar in the community

CAUSES OF DIVORCE IN ZIMBABWE INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES

- Infertility or Barrenness especially on the part of the wife

This is the greatest cause of divorce since the inability to bear children blocks the stream of life

I f the man is sterile or impotent , his brother can perform the sexual duties and fertilize the wife on his behalf and thus saving the marriage from breaking down.

In some cases if the wife is barren the man takes the younger sister of the barren wife or another wife or keep the first one thus saving the first marriage

- In cases where the husband abuses the wife continuously and is proving to be cruel

Afte several appeals to the aunt or relatives , the wife may reach such a point where she decides to end the marriage for her own peace , safety and security

- Marriages also breakdown due to suspicious of magic or witchcraft on the part of the couple

Once one of the partners suspects the other of witchcraft, it becomes difficult for the marriage to be sustained

- Continued unfaithfulness from one of the partners or from either partner is also a cause of divorce

Zimbabwe Indigenous societies value the practice of men having more than one wife and they are expected to be faithful to them

However a wife who is married to a polygamist has to remain faithful to the man

Suspicion of unfaithfulness may lead to divorce

DIVORCE PROCEDURE

Once the close relatives have failed to address the indicators of divorce and depending on the gravity, sometimes the village head is involved

In this case it becomes a customary legal matter and the village head may manage to reconcile the warring parties.

If the village head does not manage to resolve the issue it graduates to the Chief

The Chief is usually the last solution in the divorce procedure and he is the one who grants divorce.

The party wishing to divorce will present his / her evidence showing that the marriage has reached irretrievable levels

Once this is done there is a divorce token known as 'gupuro' which is given to the partner being divorced

STATUS OF WOMEN IN IR

IR have influenced the shape of

WOMEN PARTICIPATION IN POLITICS

FAMILY RELATIONS AND ETHICAL CONDUCT

Aunt/Tete

She is concerned with the girls at puberty. They consult

tete to be inducted into adulthood (menstrual period). At marriage the girl introduces her partner to tete and nduma is exchanged. Sekuru does the same role for boys: teaching of skills about hunting, farming and also in marriage issues. At puberty the boys keep in close touch with the uncles.

Sahwira/Familyfriend

Participate at family events, for example, celebrations are conducted in the presence of the Sahwira. The last bath and the dressing part of it is done by the Sahwira (kunemera / kutukira). Kurovaguvu ceremony is done with the aid of the Sahwira.

Elder/Mbuya/Sekuru (Vasharukwa Vemumusha)

These are custodians of traditions and they are consultants.

B a b a a v a i p w e r e c h a i y o -the person will be lacking great deal of responsibility that should go with maturity.

Muzukuru(m w a n a w a t e t e / m w a n a w e h a n z v a d z i)

Presides over the rituals at his sekuru., for example, birth , marriage and death rituals - K u g o v a n h a k a (competing with the Sahwira where the later office are recognized). Takes over s e k u r u ' s " t s v i m b o ". Mature people should have knobkerries and z v i y o (d o r o r a s e k u r u) because they are expected to become a m u d z i m u .

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RESPECT FOR ELDERS

In IR, there is the concept of respect for elders. There are values and morals which need to be followed. These values and morals deal with the ideas that uphold the life of people in their relationship with one another and the world around them. They cover topics like truth, justice, love, right and wrong, good and evil, beauty, decency, respect for people and property, the keeping of promises and agreements, praise and blame, crime and punishment, the rights and responsibilities of the individual and their community, character, integrity etc. They help people to live with one another to settle their differences to maintain peace and harmony, to have a relationship with their environment. There are differences in the values and morals followed by different people in Africa, but many of them are similar. They change as the living conditions of people change, but they always remain a necessity in human life.

COMMUNITY AND SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

LAND IN INDIGENOUS RELIGION

The Shona share with most Africans the belief in land as sacred. It is ancestral land. Land is sacred because it bears the remains of the ancestors particularly in the form of graves of the chiefs. Shona religion is based on the grave. In the central rituals of kumutsa midzimu (rituals in honour of ancestors) the point of entry is the grave. In other rituals libations are poured on the ground. In the land is also buried the umbilical cord of people. It is the abode of the dead. When counting members of the family the Shona always include varipasi (those who in underworld). As result land is personified in sayings such as pasi rat- samwa, pasi panodya (the land is angry, the land can kill). As we have noted above ancestral spirits and chiefs own the land. At

his installation the chief holds in a clenched fist soil mixed with the body fluids of the late chief/just soil from his grave.

Primarily it is the chiefdom that stands in special relations to the land. It is the land bequeathed to chief by the ancestors. Land belongs to the living, the unborn and the dead. The chief acts as the trustee. He allocates land to people. The land does not have a marketable value. Land rights are vested in cooperative groups that have overriding right over those of individuals. So it cannot be sold or transferred to another. The chief also ensures that people follow certain taboos. For example there is a taboo that forbids commoners to eat the flesh of an antbear because it burrows the land. But the antbear is a delicacy of the chief. Another example is that the chief's household reserves the flesh of the side of an elephant on which it lies when it drops dead for consumption.

Further the chief also authorizes through ritual the gathering of wild fruits in forests regarded as sacred. He also, as we shall see in the discussion below prohibits the cutting of certain trees and the hunting of certain animals and the pollution of certain water bodies.⁴⁵ We need however to note at the outset that each Shona group/chiefdom has its own restrictions and taboos towards particular animals, trees or water bodies according to its religious belief system and values related to its historical development. We can draw a fundamental attitude to land from the above. Land (nyika) with its natural resources is owned by the ancestral guardians of the land (varidzi venyika). Attitudes are strong when attached to ancestral ownership of land and the belief in sacredness of the land serves as a common history that unite all generations of the same Shona subgroup. The Shona believe that if one does not relate to sacred aspects of nature according to prescribed taboos and restrictions the ancestors would be angry (kutsamwa) and as result some misfortune, such as drought and epidemics, might befall the community. So the fundamental attitude to land is a religious one and is based on fear of mystical sanction by the ancestors. This underlies all attitudes to other aspects of nature like animals. We can also see that there is a discriminative attitude. The land outside a particular chiefdom may not be sacred for people of another chiefdom. The chief's family may protect even some animals of religious significance for consumption only. So the chief and his family may have a privileged access to natural resources.

REVERENCE FOR NATURE AND KINSHIP WITH NATURE

TRADITIONAL SHONA COSMOLOGY

The following questions are raised: Is there a Shona religious basis for conservation? What does the Shona religion offer the search for environmental protection? Is a

dialogue possible between traditional religious leaders and modern conservationists? Do modern paradigms for conservation and Shona religion conflict, complement or criticise one another?

There are mainly three aspects to consider: i. The Transcendent- Consists of Mwari, Ancestral Spirits, and the Alien Spirits, ii. Humanity-embraces those who are alive, those about to be born and the dead, iii. Nature-biological, that is, the animal and plant life and the phenomena and objects with out biological life, that is, sacred places, stones etc.

Many Shona acknowledge the influence of the ancestral spirits. As a result there is a central belief that ancestral spirits are the owners of the cosmos. We are not sure whether they believe that the ancestral Spirits are the creators of the cosmos (natural environment). The Shona believe that all things are the work of great

ancestral spirits. The ancestral spirits are regarded to be in all things i.e in trees, stones, grass, rivers, mountains, animals (four legged) and in the winged community (birds). It is believed that ancestral spirits are above everything.

Everything is experienced as a family. We are part of the cosmos and the cosmos is part of us. The land one lives is respected and known. The Shona do not believe that the natural environment is to be used and dominated. They have been taught to be caretakers of their environment. They are distressed by the destruction of the natural environment. Inanimate objects are personified as living things by indigenous people. Before one can successfully climb a mountain, one must ask for permission (Nyanga Mountains). All creatures are perceived as kin. The assumption is that they are endowed with consciousness and the powers of the ancestral spirits. Some animals convey certain messages, for example, snakes, hyena, birds, owl are associated with some mystery (mashura).

Traditional people are conscious of the interdependence of all things; that all things depend on each. They therefore have a reciprocal rather than a dominating relationship with all beings. Trees, animals, insects etc are all to be approached with caution and consideration. If one must cut down a tree or kill an animal they must first explain their intentions. There is need to be a justification and ask for forgiveness from the ancestral spirits. The Shona relationship with the environment is a caretaker relationship. In certain places and beings the power of ancestral spirits is believed to be highly concentrated. As a result, there are sacred sites recognised by the power that believers feel there. Certain areas are kept intact because they are regarded as sacred; they remain virgin.

When the Shona are forced off their ancestral lands they feel the loss of access to their sacred power sites as a great tragedy. Special stone and animal artefacts may also carry power, for example, leopard or python skin. These are usually put on by *n'angas* and chiefs. Not everybody goes out to look for a leopard or snake; there is a limited community which has access to these animals.

For the Shona there is need for responsibility for both the individual and the community. Land and natural resources are considered a communal property belonging to the living and the dead. Chiefs, sub-chiefs and spirit mediums oversee matters related to land and natural resources' proper use. It is morally wrong to cut down trees in sacred places. It is also forbidden to gather fruits in grave sites. Reverence towards nature and natural places is a religious attitude and practice. Taboos are developed around the destruction of trees. They are also developed

around certain shrubs, sacred places, forests, rivers and wells (metal objects are not allowed at some wells). Some taboos are developed around particular animals, for example, an owl is a bad omen. There is also the idea of totems. Most animals are preserved because they are totemic animals. Religious taboos and restriction take the place of afforestation campaigns undertaken by the government of Zimbabwe in partnership with non-governmental organizations.

Animal species were preserved for generations as a result of the systems of religious values and beliefs. Shona religious beliefs seem to teach stewardship and responsibility towards natural resources. However, Shona societies are undergoing great changes due to the impact of the western value systems particularly the western economic system. The money economy has altered social relations among the Shona. It has also affected the Shona people's attitude to nature and natural resources. Natural resources are now seen as objects for exploitation and profit making. Economic activities which seem to threaten Shona economy are done in the name of development. The introduction of state control over natural resources has destroyed indigenous belief system.

The Romantic school tend to celebrate the Shona religious beliefs and values as a rallying point for environmental ethic. There is need for caution since the attitudes of traditional religion to nature is ambivalent. For example, everything connected to totemism is puzzling. Extreme opposites coincide: good and evil, accepted and forbidden practices. Some animal species can be preserved for generations as a result of totemism while others will not. The situation is worse for those species that seem to fall outside the Shona system of religious values and beliefs. This amounts to discriminative attitude to nature. Attitudes to a particular aspect may lead to a privileged access to natural resources. For example, there is a taboo that forbids commoners to eat the flesh of an antbear because it burrows the land. But the antbear is a delicacy for the chief. The chief's family may protect even some animals of religious significance for consumption only. So the chief and his family may have a privileged access to natural resources. Worse still, totemic animals by virtue of taboos attached to their parts are open to killing. The Shona kill them for special rituals or for using their skins for ceremonial dress for chiefs or when diviners perform rituals for public interest. Regarding the land, the land outside a particular chiefdom may not be sacred to people of another kingdom same applies to water bodies. This means that trees and water bodies are prone to falling victim to

exploitation by people who do not attach any sacrality on these things.

There is a different understanding of nature in terms of its sacredness. Some aspects are disregarded and treated with the least fear/care and reverence because they are not hierophanic in any sense. Those treated as hierophanies or as ends in themselves suffer the least. This means that Shona attitudes to nature are ambivalent. Extreme attitudes coincide: ecologically responsible and ecologically harmful.

SACRED PHENOMENA IN THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

Sacred Places and Objects in African Traditional Religion(s)

Sacred places are places set aside that are either in the human world or beyond the reach of this human world. They are dwelling places of ancestors: **Nyakadzimu** or **Malindidzimu**. They are like that because they offer residence to spirits that are holy. Any sacred place is as holy place. The concept sacred is derived from the Latin concept **sacer** meaning holy. Therefore sacred places are holy place.

(Ancestors are believed to interact with human beings using some specific places in individual homes, perennial pools, stones and big trees as their residential areas.)

However, there are many places that are regarded as more sacred than others. For example, hills, mountains (eg Buchwa Mts, Nyanga Mts, Matopos Mts, Mt Selinda in Chipinge). Some people who are regarded as powerful such as traditional healers and chiefs can be buried in such mountains. These places are surrounded by taboos. For example, the cutting down of trees is prohibited. Some places like Matopos and Matonjeni have become centres of pilgrimage. Some wells and pools are regarded as sacred and these are perennial and most of them are associated with mermaids. Examples of sacred pools and wells include Mana pools, Chinhoyi pool (C h i r o r o d z i v a), and Hotsprings in Nyanyadzi.

Water that is found in such places is associated as curative. Some code of conduct is given to such places. For example, people are not supposed to wear black and lewd /vulgar are prohibited. Some objects like trees, plants and stones are also regarded as sacred. For example trees such as M u t i u s i n a z i t a which provides food in times of need, the Muhacha tree under which people rituals are very sacred. D o m b o r a m w a r i in Epworth is also a sacred feature.

Natural things have religious significance. Graves and graveyards are also regarded sacred. People can consult ancestral spirits in the graveyard. The grave is the meeting point between the living and the dead. For example, the u m b u y i s o / Kurovagu ceremony makes the grave central in the whole process. Some forests are also regarded as sacred. They can be used in rainmaking ceremonies. Among the

Lele the forest has immense sacred significance. It provides food, and is the source of medicine. In most African societies they harbour the burial places for chiefs.

The traditional kitchen, the hut constitutes a sacred place. The *C hik u v a* constitutes the most sacred part in the kitchen. Its raised position symbolizes the dignity of ancestral spirits. It is the place where dialogue with the ancestral spirits takes place.

DETAILED EXPLANATION

Choto as a Sacred Place

It is strongly believed that every home's fireplace located in the kitchen is a sacred place. The sacred practitioner who can successfully and effectively use the fireplace is the wife or mother who owns the kitchen. Unfortunately, the wife or mother who owns the kitchen many times uses **choto** for malevolent purposes. If a wife or mother directs her breast on the fireplace and utter an invocation against her son or daughter then the very son or daughter may face challenges in one's life. If the invocation is said by the **samusha**: husband or father of a family then benevolence prevails on the son or daughter to whom the invocation is directed. In terms of traditional belief, it is impossible for a father to use the fireplace to cause harm or curse on his own children. The fireplace can only be ritually abused by the father to call his children back home. One example is a case where a father may have an illegal child that he wants to come home. He would direct his erect reproductive organ on the fireplace and say out the invocation. The child would come home on his/her own.

Makuva as Sacred Places

If sacred places are places set aside as holy places or the abodes of the Ultimate then graveyards are sacred places in Shona cultural beliefs. In rural societies graveyards are considered heroes' acres. They are either family based graveyards or village based graveyards. They are sacred places because they are an **axis mundi** where family/village reside and interact with the guardians of the land. They are also sacred because such graves are the specially designated places where adage village or family progenitors live in spirit form. This is the place where a number of public or nichodimus rituals are enacted to appease or say invocations to the spirit world

The most revered graveyards are those where chiefs are buried called **ninga**. These are usually located in mountain caves. Chiefdom rituals are usually enacted in such places. Rain inducing rituals: **mikwerera** are also enacted at such places. **Masvikiro** and **mhondoro** usually frequent these places whenever they

visit chiefdom to appease the chief's spirits and seek guidance and directions on what they want to do in these areas. The chief's meeting place or courts: **zumwe** are also considered sacred places that are presided over by the dumbukunyuka especially among the Manyoka people.

Extensive research has been undertaken to describe the sacredness and significance of Matonjeni to the Shona/Ndebele people. I.M. Daneel wrote a book **'The God of the Matopos'** where he highlighted the fact that Matonjeni is the nerve center of Mwari cult. The female voice in the cave is said the guiding voice in Zimbabwean socio-political and economic affairs. This voice has the power to exercise the power to head physical deformities and to induce rain throughout Zimbabwe.

Opposed to the general view that Daneel takes up in his analysis of **'mukwerere'** where he translates the concept to rain making, there is a scholarly discontent on the use of this concept. Rather, there is scholarly consensus that favours the use of the concept rain inducing. Early anthropologists used the term "rainmaking" as a ploy to condemn the African people for believing that ancestors make rain. Therefore it is proper to substitute the term "rainmaking" with the concept "rain inducing"

Mhandara (Musikavanhu area in Chipinge)

This is a sacred place for the people of Musikavanhu and Chiwara people – Vaduma. It is a place where a virgin daughter was given to a Muduma Chief consolidate the relation within the Duma Confederation as highlighted by Mtetwa, A. Chigwedere's explorative work on early settlements in Zimbabwe and the partitioning of Zimbabwe along totemic lines also takes up the issue. It is argued in treatise that the Mhandara hills became sacred mountains after the aforementioned Musikavanhu and the Duma Chief event.

Dzimbabwe

There is controversy as to who the custodians of this world wonder were. A Chigwedere says the Dziva people constructed it. K Mufuka argues for the Hungwe people. And D N Abraham argues for the Shoko people. What has come up of late is that it is a question of one's historical argument that one is obliged to take one theory at the expense of the other. The symbol of the bird is argued to represent the wealth of the Zimbabwe kingdom. This is made to translate into a symbol to represent the Hungwe people as the architects of this monument. But I. M. Daneel and Mtetwa argue that the centre was used as the centre for rain inducing. This is also supported in different texts written by A Chigwedere and D N Beach. It is reasonable therefore to postulate the Nemanwa people of the

Shoko descendants as the developers of this monument. But the issue of wealth and trade that characterize the foundation and development of this monument as argued by K Mufuka can out rightly make the Dziva people the architects of the monument. This was the capital city of the Dzimbabwe kingdom. It served as a metropolitan city providing political, economic military and religious as well as social functions to the kingdom.

Politically, decisions were promulgated and enforced in this capital. Economically, the Muslims and Portuguese traders had to visit this place to do barter trade between clothes and ivory, guns and gold, bullets and salt. Religiously, this place served as a sub rain making centre to Malindidzimu. It is said that it was in the greater acropolis that rain inducing rituals as well as state based rituals were enacted. Socially this place was the

homeland of the royal family a place where the ruling lineage was to preside in contrast to other lineages that were supposed to live on the periphery of the cosmopolitan city.

Zambezi River

A number of myths and legends are said about this perennial river. It is a river belonging to the BaTonga people. This is the reason why the BaTonga people are called the river people. In this river resides the god of the Tonga people called Nyaminyami. It is a legendary snake. Nyaminyami incarnates in two forms. In one way the snake appears in the substance of a snake and the forms are male and female Nyaminyami. Its mysterious work resulted in the deaths of a number of migrant workers, some of who have names in Kariba Cathedral. Arguments are therefore made especially within the traditional circles where earthquakes and tremors that usually vibrate in the Zambezi escarpment are said to be the fight of the male Nyaminyami against the Dam wall, so as to be united to his wife.. Therefore the Zambezi escarpment served as an economic purpose though a sacred place for it provided fish to the BaTonga people. Religiously, the BaTonga use the Musiatunya falls for ritual cleansing or some other particular ritual. (washing away misfortunes)

The Zambezi River was also said to provide some powerful medicines from its underground world. And these medicines were known throughout Guruuswa leading some Shona people to saying “ ndokuendera kumaroro” meaning I will get medicines from the Baroro people meaning the BaTonga people. The medicines are so powerful that even the lions are afraid of human beings. And if a Tonga gets into the river to catch fish, all crocodiles run away from the fishmonger.

Functions of Sacred Places

Sacred places play a vital role in the life and history of the indigenes. These places play a central role in the socio-political and religious lives of the indigenes. They also

play a central role in natural conservation, cultural preservation and perpetuation. They are respected places that provide tranquility and unity of purpose to the communities that revere them. The functions include but are not exclusive of the following:

The religious functions of sacred places:

Such places are used as rain inducing centers where rain inducing specialists: **jukwa** usually reside. Sacred practitioners occasion these places to get inspiration, encourage and professional renewal from these places. Rituals that usually embrace the region of the place's location are performed within the confines of sacred places. They are pilgrim centers where the local community frequent to get spirit and human inspiration. They are burial places: **ninga** for the most atoned medical and spiritual practitioners. Of old, these places used to be used as hiding places for treating forces in the face of an advancing enemy force. Those that were killed in these places were honorified as heroes of the struggle therein turning the place into a Heroes' acre. Piacular rites for land preservation were enacted in such places. Any talk about the community's union with the spirit world achieved its apex when activities related to antecessorial veneration were done in these places.

The social functions of sacred places

Such places were designated for celebrities in the community. The atonement of Chiefs, Kraal heads and other opinion leaders in the community was usually punctuated by celebrations performed in the sacred places as a way of dedicating the elected to the spirit world. Celebrations such as requests for rain from antecessors: **mikwerere**, thanksgiving rituals: **matatenda** and the Chiefs' coronations were done or finalized in the sacred places. The decision making assembly: **zumwe** for most Chiefs was located in sacred places. This way, the elected members of the Chief's ruling class used sacred places as a meeting place to adjudicate over socio-political issues and religious considerations related to their communities.

The political functions of sacred places: Since sacred places are the burial place for the forbearers of the land, inspiration related to land revolutions and spiritual reforms were many times mooted from sacred places. Most of the political decisions that were taken by the Chiefs were usually born out the directions presented to the Chiefs by the voice they used to get from the sacred places. Instructions related to wars initiation or stoppages were always directed from the sacred places. This way, sacred places play important political roles to the lives and experiences of the communities around them.

The economic functions of sacred places:

Sacred places used to be the economic harbor of traditional societies. Most of the

gold mined, salt collected, ivory etc that communities had at their disposal used to be traded within the confines of sacred places. Trading was centered and confined to the Zimbabwe during the Mutapa dynasty. Barter trade needed the blessing and direction of the spirits of the land that resided in the sacred places so all trading was policed by the Chief who used to live close to the sacred places where he got his inspiration. Community granaries: **matura** were situated in sacred places. Seed to fill the granaries were sourced from the community fields: **zunde raMambo** that were presided over by the Chief. Orphans, widows and widowers could get food support from such granaries as a show of the community's commitment to the plight of the vulnerable groups.

The ecological functions of sacred places:

Sacred places used to be places set aside for natural conservancies. No person was allowed to embark on any environmentally unfriendly activity in sacred places. Ethno-medical plants and indigenous fruit tree could be successfully preserved within sacred places. It was a taboo for any person to cut down trees in sacred places. No medical practitioner or assistant to the practitioner was allowed to source any herbal medicine from this place. When the people were allowed to center the sacred place, they were instructed to observe the etiquettes of the place or face mysterious disappearance. No vulgar language was allowed in sacred places. Bad behaviors and environmentally unfriendly activities were discouraged in sacred places. This way, sacred places worked as ecological conservancies.

Sacred places as cultural preservation and perpetuation centers: Since sacred places were the places where cultural competitions and cultural observances were rekindled, the places remain the center to check and balance cultural dynamics. Traditionalists knew very well that culture is dynamic, they used the sacred places to police or determine the dynamism of culture by soliciting the guidance from the spiritual practitioners.

Sacred places as pilgrimage centers: Sacred places used to be places where community leaders, the sick and ordinary people seeking guidance visited annually to get inspiration, healing and direction as to the developmental needs of the people. Some sacred places were totemic centers where members of a totem longed to visit once in their lifetime to be one with their totemic pathfinders buried in the sacred places.

A list of sacred places

1. Choto
2. Chikuva
3. Makuva
4. Hozi
5. Zumwe
6. Ninga
7. Chinhoyi Caves
8. Matonjeni- Matopo hills
9. Nevana cult in Gokwe
10. Mhandara hills in Chipinge
11. Mutiusinazita in
12. Ruguhune hills in Chimanimani
13. Marandure hills in Bocha
14. Gombe Mountain in Buhera
15. Rasa Mountain in Gutu
16. Buhwa in Mberengwa
17. Dzimbabwe now called Great Zimbabwe Monuments
18. Nyanga mountains in Nyanga
Zambezi River

In conclusion, sacred places are many among the indigenous people. They serve various purposes. Some purposes are of a spiritual nature. Others are of an ecological nature while others are of a socio-cultural nature.

TABOOS AND THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

It is argued that Shona taboos provide moral sanctions that help in shaping a person's unhu (virtue) in the human community. It is through such inculcation of proper behavior in the young and the grown-up that social order is enhanced in a Shona society. There are taboos that intend to promote good health, prevent bad habits and those that discourage cruelty to other living creatures. However, by and large, Shona taboos help in shaping human conduct and fostering eco-friendly behavior.

Gelfand (1973), says "the Shona possess much that is worth retaining and the prospects are that they will save a good deal of it in succeeding generations." Indeed, among the Shona people's treasured cultural aspects that have, for generations, helped to shape the conduct of its people are taboos.

Shona taboos (zviera) are quite rich because of their epistemic, paternalistic and moral dimensions. They are one among a number of sanctions that are employed in order to ensure proper behavior in the Shona society. Zviera are strong sanctions that discourage certain forms of human behavior (Tatira, 2000b; see also Tatira,

2000a). It is through the use of such sanctions that people come to know of the good traits to inculcate and bad traits to avoid. In this light, Gelfand (1973) affirms that “the Shona have clear concepts of virtues and vices and they have much to say about aberrations of personality.” This means that, for Gelfand, the Shona have a clear idea of what constitutes correct human behavior in society and its importance in enhancing a good life devoid of the vices that would render their society chaotic. Only through correct character traits should the relationship between human beings become possible, otherwise social stability is a mirage in a situation where people are not correctly disposed to act morally. It is in light of this quest that the Shona (Tatira, 2005) have devised ways of trying to enforce acceptable behavior among them. In order to ensure that people adhere to the Shona moral code, taboos that threaten severe punishment and misfortunes are used to tame those who may be tempted to perform anti-social actions.

SITUATING TABOOS IN THE SHONA WORLDVIEW

The Shona people have an obsession with the desire to inculcate right ethos in an individual. Taboos are among a number of methods through which the character of an individual is shaped in the Shona cosmology. Taboos of the Shona have a teleological nature in that they are sanctions that are meant to inculcate the most appropriate traits in the person that would make him a worthy member of his community. According to Chigidi (2009), “These avoidance rules are restrictive and not directive in the sense that they only tell the individual what not to do and not what to do” and by implication one is made to pick up desirable behavioral traits otherwise acting contrary to the dictates of taboos invites nasty consequences. A good character is a solid weapon against various anti-social behaviors. The outcome of good character is good reputation whereby a person becomes the envy of many because of his commendable dispositions. Though the inculcation of commendable character traits in individuals is a lifelong process, it is believed, among the Shona, that such moral education makes an indelible impression in one’s formative years. In this light, children are taught the difference between good and bad behavior and they also learn to avoid a number of taboos. Strong and severe warnings for those who violate the Shona moral code are quite visible in the taboos.

The actuality of punishment and a host of other nasty consequences if one dares to violate the moral code help to instill commendable moral behavior in the Shona society. It is in light of this fact that Gelfand (1979) contends that “the purpose of these taboos is to instill a sense of discipline into the children as well as one of fear.” The aspect of fear that is normally associated with Shona taboos is a way of dissuading people from performing immoral acts. Hence, it has an instrumental value in that it discourages people from certain such behaviors that run contrary to the ethos of the Shona society. Though Shona taboos are fear inducing, this fear

has no intrinsic worth, but is a means to an end, that is, promotion of good behavior. Though this means of achieving a virtuous life is morally questionable, the philosophy in Shona taboos is that the end justifies the means. Fear may not be the best and ethically appropriate tool to achieve the end of a virtuous life in the Shona society, but the goodness of the end trivializes the badness of the means.

The Shona believe that ancestral spirits help in ensuring that one's character is good provided that that person does not offend them through, among others, failure to perform periodic rituals in their honor as well as a host of other social misdemeanors such as incest (makunakuna). Therefore, the violation of taboos can be seen as a direct provocation of ancestral spirits who are the custodian of the moral code. Tatira (2000b) concurs with Gelfand when he notes that "an act that breaches a taboo triggers a reaction supposedly at the supernatural level. This is effective since children easily operate at make-believe level. Without this fear of the unknown, young people are generally adventurous, full of doubts and questions, and like experimenting with things." He rightly notes that taboos are effective moral tools because their violation invites the ire of ancestral spirits who are one of the key pillars of Shona religion. However, he seems to ignore the fact that taboos in the Shona cosmology are not only relevant among children but indispensable throughout one's course of life. For the Shona, ukagara paduri, vakadzi vose vaunoroora vanofa (if you sit on the mortar in which grain is pounded, all the wives that you marry would die). Such a taboo discourages both young and old males from doing such a bad act because it threatens very serious consequences to the one who may be tempted to violate it. Even in one's adulthood, such a moral sanction remains relevant because no one is prepared to threaten the life of his wife by sitting on the mortar given the Shona belief in ngozi (avenging spirits). For the Shona, if a person is willfully killed, his spirit will come back to haunt the killer and his relatives. Since the loss of one's wife through willful actions is a tragedy that invites ngozi, this bad habit of sitting on the mortar is avoided because of the fear of ngozi. Thus, taboos are a form of moral education that one is introduced to in the formative years of one's character and have lifetime relevance.

For Gelfand (1979), through informal instruction at home, the young are taught "...what taboos they should know..." in the life-long Shona syllabi. Such informal teaching is expertly scheduled not to interfere with other important preoccupations of human life. So, nights after meals and completion of household chores as well as spring when there is relatively little work to be done in the fields and gardens, furnish the ideal time to inculcate commendable traits of conduct in the young so that they become members of the community that exudes with unhu. Unhu as understood by the Shona entails a state of character that is acceptable not only by the person concerned but more importantly by his society (see Menkiti, 1984). Such commendable traits are derived from moral education administered and influenced by, among others, parents, family sages and group practices. Thus, a sound moral education administered through taboos help in preparing and perfecting the young to

earn an ethical life external to the family confines and in the public domain.

Unlike proverbs and riddles whose method of imparting is, to some extent, dialogical, taboos are teleological commands that are meant to shape the conduct of a person, as he is perceived as a member of a community. Gelfand (1979) would want to call taboos 'avoidance rules' precisely because they implore their recipients to desist from certain behaviors because of their undesirable tendencies within a community of other beings. For him, avoidance rules or taboos are one of the three Shona pillars that prepare one into a whole person who has an understanding of reality and whose conduct is admirable. The other two pillars are proverbs and riddles. These pillars are taught to the young until adulthood. Almost always "...when a child has misbehaved in some way, an appropriate...avoidance rule...may be cited" (Gelfand, 1979) as a way of correcting that immoral act. Thus, the Shona's penchant for a good life devoid of bad human qualities is achieved partly by the role taboos play in regulating the conduct of members of society given the actuality of conflicting interests when and wherever there are more than one person in a given physical space.

The richness of Shona taboos as exhibited in its moral and paternalistic dimensions underlines the centrality of unhu among the Shona. Unhu for the Shona is exhibited, among others, through one's interaction with fellow human beings, the environment and the way he caters for his hygienic requirements. For this reason, therefore, the paper is going to discuss taboos about health, good and bad habits and those that discourage cruelty not only to fellow human beings but also to the whole community of sentient beings and the environment in general. The totality of these taboos put together is crucial in inculcating disposition that makes a person well-disposed to exhibit unhu through his utterances, words and deeds. Though scholarship has tended to come up with various categories of taboos (Gelfand, 1979; Tatira, 2000b), this paper argues that taboos have one central goal in that they aim towards the perfection of one's character in all facets of human life.

One key attribute of Shona taboos is that they have sublime moral import. The moral import is not apparent from a face value analysis but requires a passionate exposition in order to unearth the real moral sanctions behind them. Another attribute of Shona taboos is that in order to inculcate correct character traits in an individual, one is prevented from doing certain actions by revealing the nasty and fear-inducing consequences of doing so. Granted the actuality that humanity desires a good life and loathes a miserable one, through moral sanctions that tell apprentices that if one behaves in a certain way, his life will be affected in a negative way, people would tend to avoid vices and opt for a virtuous life.

Shona taboos do not reveal the correct consequences for performing certain actions but give a consequence that a human being naturally loathes and fears. Therefore, for one to comprehend the complexity of Shona taboos, one has to look at their

common and hidden meaning. For example, the Shona people are discouraged from sitting on hearthstones on the common understanding that doing so would lead one to murder his wife or one's wife will die. Through fear of losing a wife as a result of such an undesirable habit of sitting on hearthstones, one would avoid doing so. However, the real reason why people are discouraged from sitting on hearthstones has nothing to do with causing death to one's partner but is a sanction meant to inculcate virtues of cleanliness in individuals.

It is in light of the intricacy of Shona taboos that apprentices are shaped into a people that cherish a life of unhu as opposed to a life of unhu hwakaipa (vicious character). Thus, Shona ethics as reflected in taboos employs a carrot and stick approach in that apprentices are made to believe that failure to live a life of unhu, bad things will visit them. Though the end justifies the means, the means is problematic in that it instills unhu in people through means that outsiders of the Shona society would regard as unethical and controversial. However, such a method of inculcating unhu in the young achieves its desirable result albeit through use of uncouth tactics that threatens nasty personal and family consequences to the one who dares to violate them.

TABOOS THAT PROMOTE GOOD HEALTH

Shona people are well known for their penchant for a hygienic living, cleanliness and environmental consciousness. For Tatira (2000b), "zviera are vital in transmitting values on issues pertaining to hygiene...cruelty, precaution and good behavior" on members of society. Their traditional houses are generally neatly built, decorated, thatched and kept clean. This penchant for cleanliness transcends the upkeep of the individual to cover one's character as exhibited through his interactions with other beings and his relation to the world external to him in general. It is a Shona actuality that one's unhu is also exhibited by the manner in which he deals with not only human beings but also other living creatures and the environment in general.

According to the traditional African metaphysical outlook, human beings tend to be cosmically humble and, therefore, not only more respectful of other people but also more cautious in their attitudes to plants, animals and inanimate things, and the various visible forces of the world (Tangwa, 2006; see also Duri & Mapara, 2007). Thus, one is attracted to the Shona people's harmony with nature and sustainable use of natural resources through, among others, their pole and dagga houses that are thatched with grass, and neatly arranged in a linear order along mountains and rivers. However, despite the Shona's environmental consciousness and quest for sound hygienic standards, there are members of their society who may be tempted to engage in activities that go against these virtues. Because of the Shona's obsession with maintaining good health through hygienic living and prevention of anti-social activities thereof, a number of zviera are put in place. One taboo that attempts to entrench good hygienic standards among human beings is that: Ukagara

papfihwa, unouraya mukadzi (If you sit on a hearthstone, you will kill your wife)

This taboo is directed at someone who has the habit of sitting on hearthstones that form the pillars of a fireplace. A Shona fireplace is made up of three stones that are meant to anchor cooking pots. The hearth is, thus, a very important place in Shona cosmology because it defines womanhood and symbolizes aspects of Shona sexuality (Ashwanden, 1982). It is the woman's territory that has a sacredness that must be respected because it symbolizes his sexual parts. The presence of moto (fire) in man among the Shona means presence of productive sexual activity and its absence means lack of productive sexual activity between the man and the women. The man must be able to 'cause a fire' on the 'hearth' literally meaning that he must be able to make a woman pregnant. Thus, the taboo gives sanctions to those who may be tempted to sit on the pillars of this important and sacred place in the Shona worldview. It implores people not to sit on hearthstones because doing so would lead one to kill one's partner or the partner would die mysteriously. The taboo touches on a very delicate aspect of life. Among the Shona, for a person to be respected as a munhu, he or she must be married and have children. Thus, anything that threatens the demise of one's partner brings a lot of fear to him.

However, the actual reason for such a moral sanction is that it is unhealthy to seat on a place where food is prepared. By their very nature, hearthstones are sooty and whoever comes into contact with them risks being corrupted by their soot. Thus, seating on hearthstones makes one's buttocks blackish as a result of the soot. Another reason for such a moral sanction is that one can get burnt if the hearthstones are hot and one also may be tempted to move them away thereby destroying the fireplace. Therefore, there is a sense in which seating on hearthstones is an affront to Shona ethos. The moral sanction is strongly emphasized especially on men who have the habit of sitting on hearthstones. Men are required to be as far as possible from the cooking place so as to allow women enough space and time to prepare food for the family without unnecessary interference. So, if a man has the habit of sitting on hearthstones when a woman is cooking, he is tempted to make comments about how she ought to prepare food that may eventually offend his wife, parent or sister who would be cooking. For that reason, the Shona have devised clever ways of dissuading people from sitting on hearthstones.

The second taboo under this category is: Ukaitira tsvina munzira, unoitamamota kumagaro (If you excrete on the road, you develop boils on the buttocks)

Even though the Shona have a penchant for cleanliness, there are some among them who may show a lack of unhu by excreting on pathways (nzira) not only because they are not aware of the badness of doing so, but also for sadistic reasons. Such vicious characters may be motivated by the desire to make passer byes step on them and get annoyed thereof. In addition, young people who are, by and large,

targets of this avoidance rule may not know the wrongness of excreting on pathways. As a result, such a moral sanction is meant for such people who may be tempted to excrete on pathways. Those who do so and those who have a potential of doing so are warned that such actions would invite painful boils on the buttocks (magaro). Such a serious affliction would affect one's movements and can be a subject of ridicule, if people discover that one has boils on the buttocks. Thus, because of fear of such consequences, one would always try to avoid excreting on pathways. As if to confirm the 'truth' of such a moral sanction, some people may develop boils on the buttocks after excreting on pathways. Though the development of such boils may be just but accidental after one had excreted on the road, the Shona often fail to make a distinction between a commonsensical consequence of such a bad deed and the medical explanation for the development of boils.

The actual consequence of excreting on the road is that it is unhygienic to do so because pedestrians, especially those who are bare footed may accidentally step on them and thereby risk catching disease-causing bacteria that may be carried in human stools such as cholera bacteria. In addition, small children may play with these stools thereby compromising their health. The offender also risks being seen and assaulted by passer-byes, overrun by vehicles or scotch carts. The normal reaction of a Shona when he comes across a stool along the road is to question the character of the offender. The character of the offender is reflected in his deed of excreting on human pathways. Terms such as imbwa (dog) and benzi (a mad fellow) are normally used to characterize the unhu of this person. Thus, the Shona do not take lightly those people whose flawed character compromises the health and well-being of members of society. In light of this, therefore, it is immoral and unhygienic to excrete along human pathways. Threats of witchcraft are also used in order to dissuade people from engaging in such immoral acts. The Shona believe that some bad people can take one's stools and bewitch them such that the culprit would have great difficulties in excreting and urinating.

TABOOS THAT PREVENT BAD HABITS

In the Shona worldview, the term unhu is used to refer to tsika (good character). Normally a person with a commendable disposition is referred to as munhu chaiye, meaning a person of good character. For the Shona (Gelfand, 1981), unhu plays a supreme role in people's lives as they interact with fellow human beings and all that constitute the world external to them. Thus, for the Shona, a good person is the one who exhibits good behavior towards others as reflected in his actions and interactions with not only fellow human beings but also the whole of nature. Such a person is liked and respected in the community because of his good dispositions.

For Gelfand (1973), that "... state of being approved of, or that quality which causes a person's presence to be appreciated and to give a feeling of pleasure to others is called unhu." Unhu among the Shona is a product of moral education conducted by,

among others, parents, sages and group practices that are inherited from past generations. So, various stakeholders in the community teach unhu to members, a concept that can be equated to the western concept of virtue. Thus, a good man among the Shona lives a life of unhu and his commendable character is reflected by his actions as he interacts with fellow human beings and the external world in general. The importance that the Shona people attach to commendable character is reflected in taboos that encourages good behavior and discourages bad behavior.

One typical example of such taboos is: Ukadongorera munhu achigeza, unoitwa showera (If you peep on a person who is bathing, you will develop pimples on your eyelids)

The Shona treasures the natural beauty of a person. In the traditional Shona society, people normally bath in rivers and streams and most of the bathing places have assumed some form of permanence. There are bathing places for the male and female members of society respectively. No one is supposed to violate this unwritten rule that men are not supposed to bath at woman's bathing spots and vice versa. Men who crave to see those women that they desire most in their natural beauty, that is, in their nakedness when bathing normally do the bad habit of peeping on women who are bathing. Fearing the actuality that such extraordinary desires might turn out into a neurosis that may open flood gates to such fantasies leading to vices such as rape and adulterous relationships, Shona people have come up with sanctions that discourage people from exposing themselves to situations that may tempt them to indulge in anti-social activities as a result of such uncouth practices. This taboo posits that the offender's perceptual tools, that is, eyes, would develop painful pimples as a result of such uncouth peeping.

Highlighting the dangers that visit the one who violates this taboo, therefore, helps in curtailing such immoral acts. It is interesting to note that some of these avoidance rules have assumed the status of 'the truth' in that most people in the Shona society accept that whenever one develops pimples on the eye lids, it is because one, in one way or another, peeped at a naked person bathing. Thus, the one who develops pimples on the eyelids, especially men, may fear being laughed at for having peeped at naked women. However, the actual truth is that such nefarious and clandestine lust for one's beauty in one's nakedness may invite temptations on the part of the perceiver to fulfill his abnormal desires for a certain person by uncouth means. Such a person is regarded as a bad person and his excessive passions make him more disposed to rape his victims because he is so desirous of naked women. For Tatira (2000b), members of society ought to be assured of their privacy through such "taboos [that] repress symptoms of potentially criminal behavior." Among the Shona, a person who covets (kuchiva) is a threat to social order because he is attracted to what is not his such as a neighbor's wife or children and material possessions. Such a person is driven by a strong impulse that forces him to do certain things that are immoral. Gelfand (1973) equates a covetous person to a "...a witch, since his

covetousness might drive to the practices of witchcraft in order to achieve his desires.” Therefore, the Shona try to discourage such bad character traits by the strongest moral sanctions that threaten ill health for the one who dares to do such immoral actions.

Ukateedzera chirema, unoita chiremawo (If you imitate a lame person, you will become lame too)

The Shona may view people with disabilities with suspicion because it is generally agreed that such mishaps are causally related to certain actions or non-actions by parents or family members. Though the Shona believe that deformities in a person can be a result of biological abnormalities, it is commonly believed that deformities that one is born with are, among others, a result of the anger of vadzimu. The punishment and retribution of vadzimu can be manifested in the form of deformities in the children of the offending persons.

Disability is also blamed on the works of jealous witches who do not want to see a certain family having able-bodied children. Thus, it is believed that disability is ‘contagious’ in that the one who openly laughs at or imitate, for example, the awkward walks of a disabled person would also become lame. No one wants the burdens and negative public perception associated with being lame. Therefore, through the moral threat that if one were to imitate a lame person one risks being lame also, people feel morally obligated to respect people with disabilities. This is enough moral sanction to discourage people from belittling the humanity of disabled people despite their biological abnormalities.

Therefore, the Shona discourage people from looking down upon members of society who are lame through making disparaging remarks about their biological conditions. Such moral sanctions are enforced through threats that the one who go against this taboo risks being lame too. Thus, kunyomba (abusing or mocking) those who are lame is a bad human quality that the Shona normally blame on lack of adequate moral education. A person who belittles another human being on the basis of one’s disability lacks unhu and the Shona have a clever way of curtailing such bad habits through appropriate taboos.

TABOOS THAT DISCOURAGE CRUELTY TO OTHER LIVING CREATURES

The Shona have an environmental ethic that takes into account the interests of not only sentient beings, but the whole of nature in general. Though they do not disapprove of sustainable use of nature’s resources including other living creatures for, among others, draught power and food, they are against wanton destruction of fauna and flora without justification. They also take great exception to the cruelty to animals because for them, all animals are sentient and therefore deserve to be given moral consideration. According to ESS (2010), there was a common cultural belief in the African cosmology that forbade unwarranted killing and brutalization of wild

animals, "...especially those which society held in contempt such as hyenas and monkeys, and also the young of all species" and "there can be little doubt that these strategies emanated from people who had concern for their environment and its ecosystems, an attitude which enabled societies to conserve their resources on a sustainable basis without written legislation." For them, a person who exhibit violent surges through, for instance, wanton cutting down of trees without any need for them and cruelty to other living creatures lacks unhu in that a person trained to act in moderation is not supposed to show lack of concern even to the rest of fauna and flora. Lalonde (2010) argues that African societies have "...positive traditional management practices that have been adapted and passed down over countless generations in harmony with the short and long-term carrying capacities of the local ecosystem. Some of these positive practices are based on symbolism, and involve spiritual rituals, religious practices, social taboos, and sacred animal totems.

For the Shona, the natural environment has certain sacred places that are so indispensable in their religious beliefs such as certain mountains, curves, rivers, grave sites and forests that ought not to be defiled through, among others, undue cutting down of trees that grace them and killing of other living creatures for the sake of it. Therefore, the Shona cherish a life of living in harmony with the natural environment and what it holds. The Shona people's dislike for cruelty to other living creatures and the environment in general is reflected through a number of zvieras such as the following: Ukauraya datya matenga, anotadza kunaisa mvura (If you kill a frog, heavens will fail to bring down rain)

It is a truism in all cultures that rain or water is indispensable for the sustenance of life on earth. Both animals and vegetation needs water for their continued survival. Therefore, any human action or otherwise that tends to compromise the availability of water is feared and discouraged. Thus, in order to stop cruelty to animals such as frogs (matatya), the Shona have devised a way of stopping such cruel and immoral acts.

Among the Shona, frogs are not a delicacy. So, whoever kills a frog is not killing it for justifiable purpose of consuming it, but simply for, perhaps, sadistic reasons. Even though the Shona people approve of killing animals for meat, they strongly disapprove of people who kill animals simply for the pleasure of doing so. Shona myths have it that traditional wells that are normally graced by a large population of frogs are blessed because frogs would insure an unlimited supply of water as a result of their urine. Thus, killing frogs would not only have the ripple effects of preventing rain from falling, but also wells will dry up.

However, the actual truth behind such a taboo is that, because of the Shona's passionate environmental ethic, the killing of small creatures such as frogs for no justifiable purpose is immoral. It reflects the flawed character of the person who performs such immoral acts in that wanton destruction of the lives of other living

creatures may open floodgates for abuse even of human beings. The Shona often remark that *mhuka netupuka tune ropawo sevanhu* (animals and other small creatures have blood too) meaning that they are capable of experiencing pleasure and pain just like sentient human beings. In this regard, that which has blood must be treated with respect as an end in itself. Thus, a person who beats up his donkeys, pigs, or cattle is normally reprimanded for doing so because these animals also feel pain and the reasoning is that no one has a right to inflict pain or end the life of other living creatures without a genuine reason. In this regard, cruelty to other living creatures may lead to a slippery slope scenario whereby the offender may extend such cruelty to human beings.

Italian Medieval philosopher, Thomas Aquinas (Tranøy, 1964), British empiricist, John Locke (Regan, 1983) and German rationalist philosopher, Immanuel Kant (Singer, 1993) argued that human beings ought not be cruel to other living creatures because doing so may harden one's heart towards fellow human beings. Regan (Singer, 1993) quotes Locke as having remarked that: One thing that I have frequently observed in children, that when they have got possession of any poor Creature, they are apt to use it ill: they often torment, and treat very roughly, young Birds, Butterflies, and such other poor Animals, which fall into their Hands, and that with a seeming kind of Pleasure. This, I think should be watched in them, and if they incline to any such Cruelty, they should be taught the contrary Usage. For the Custom of Tormenting and Killing of Beasts, will, by Degrees, harden their Minds even towards Men: and they, who delight in the Suffering and Destruction of Inferior Creatures, will not be apt to be very compassionate, or benign to those of their own kind...

So, a tormentor of other living creatures may extend his cruelty to human beings. While Aquinas and Kant argued that other living creatures could not be ascribed direct moral status because they are not rational, Locke appealed to the criterion of sentience to ascribe some form of moral status to other living creatures. For Aquinas and Kant (Boss, 1999), other living creatures ought not to be mistreated only in so far as doing so may hurt their owners. Thus, for them, other living creatures have instrumental as opposed to intrinsic worth. A thing has intrinsic worth if it is important in its own self, while a being has instrumental value only in so far as it is a means to some end. In the Shona worldview, other living creatures have intrinsic value in so far as they are sentient. Thus, such a moral sanction discourages the mistreatment of other living creatures, big or small, for sadistic reasons. *Ukatasva imbwa, unozoita muroyi* (If you ride a dog, you will become a witch)

Because of the vilification and isolation that often visits a person accused of witchcraft, no one is willing to be associated with witchcraft, for whatever reasons. Such fears of being associated with witchcraft (Lagerwerf, 1992; Zvarevashe, 1970) are used to discourage people from riding a dog. The Shona believe that, in their nocturnal escapades, witches ride on hyenas or fellow human beings, and a person

who often claims tiredness in the morning is normally said to have been rode by a witch during the night. It is possibly from this practice that the Shona commonly believe that whoever rides a dog is simply behaving like a witch that rides hyenas and human beings at night on his evil errands.

A dog is a small animal that, ordinarily, cannot sustain the weight of a human being. So, riding a dog is simply being cruel to it. In light of the Shona people's concern for the welfare of other living creatures, particularly the domesticated ones, those who have a habit of riding dogs are reprimanded from doing so by way of taboos. Riding a dog, therefore, reflects badly on the character of the one who does this action because such action totally disregards the pain and anguish that the dog undergoes as a result of such an action. The dog may bit the rider because the pain it undergoes may be too unbearable. Therefore, a person of unhu cannot stoop so low to ride a dog.

A person who does such a cruel act to another living creature loses respect in society. Such a person has utsinye (cruelty) or has mwoyo wakaipa (a bad heart) because his deeds are predicated on unnecessary infliction of pain on other sentient beings. Therefore, such a person ought to be discouraged through the avoidance rule that implores people not to misuse or abuse other living creatures. Such a person may fair badly in his relations to fellow human beings. The Shona regard domesticated animals such as dogs as important 'stakeholders' at the homestead because there are certain key responsibilities that they have and do with distinction such as protecting the household from intruders as well as safeguarding its owner if he is in danger of being attacked by fellow human beings and other living creatures. Therefore, the Shona see dogs as key members of the family and this entails that they ought not to be unnecessarily mistreated.

Therefore, the one who abuses dogs and other living creatures exhibits a bad conscience and therefore moral insensitivity to other living creatures. Just like the Shona, British hedonistic utilitarian, Jeremy Bentham (Boss, 1999) advocated for the ascription of moral status to other living creatures. Utilitarianism as conceptualized by Bentham holds that an action is right if it brings about net amount of pleasure to the ones affected by that given action. He argues that the criterion for the ascription of moral rights to other living creatures ought not to be based on, among others, the ability to reason and talk, but on the ability to experience pain and pleasure. For him (Miller, 1983), "...the question is not, Can they reason, nor Can they talk? but, can they suffer." Among the Shona, a person who unnecessarily inflicts pain on a living creature is simply a bad man because his cruelty to other living creatures may end up negatively affecting his conduct in the human society. In view of this, the Shona regards the one who abuses other living creatures as having a serious moral defect that may have slippery slope effects to human beings as well. Hence, taboos are one of the major sources of Shona environmental ethics. However, "colonialism and modern western thought regarded these cultural systems as backward, superstitious

and inimical to rapid economic growth. It introduced laws which dealt a devastating blow to the environmentally-friendly culture which governed the day-to-day activities of indigenous people. Through the use of force, white settlers appropriated large tracts of rich land and forced the majority of African people into the most denuded animal-free areas, which they called reserves" (Kasere, 2010). It is an actuality that after years of colonial subjugation, the Shona and other indigenous social groupings still clings to their age-old belief systems on, among others, the superiority of the spiritual forces and the fact that morally scandalous behavior such as disregard of certain avoidance rules attracts the ire of these spiritual forces.

SHONA TABOOS AND SUSTAINABLE USE OF THE ENVIRONMENT

Conservation and sustainable use of nature's resources are not impositions from the world external to Africa through, among others, colonialism and globalization as pro-West scholars would want to argue. In the context of Zimbabwe's concerted efforts to foster and enhance sustainable use of the environment through programs such as CAMPFIRE (Communal Areas Management Programme for Indigenous Resources) (Mapedza, 2007), the power to ensure biodiversity and sustainable use of nature's animal and other resources is vested in grassroots people. However, the efforts by such bodies to foster eco-friendly attitudes (Kasere, 2010) among people in Zimbabwe is just but a complementary endeavor to strengthen the cultural values of the indigenous people as reflected in, among others, taboos that have ensured a responsible use of nature's resources. Kasere (2010) rightly notes that "the cultural component in Campfire not only proves to the world that sustainability is not a creation of western scholarship, as many would argue, but also explains why Campfire has managed to rapidly win the hearts of millions of Zimbabweans when other programs, both in Zimbabwe and abroad, could not make it beyond the design stage." Thus, there is a sense in which responsible use of nature's resources predates colonialism and other Western inroads into the Shona and other African societies.

Kasere (2010) repudiates the prevailing contention that conceptualizes "...Africans as non-conservationists at heart who have fallen in love with Campfire only because of the meat and money it generates. My contention, on the contrary, is that the program has been accepted by people because it does not contradict the African wisdom about environment. While economic incentives are indispensable, the program preaches and practices sustainable consumption as a vehicle for development. This is the language the Zimbabwean people and their ancestors have been practicing since time immemorial." A cursory look at the taboos that discourages people from harming the environment in various ways such as brutalization of some vulnerable creatures and pollution amply shows that the Shona and other African social groupings have always valued the need to exploit nature's resources in a sustainable way. For example, people are discouraged from cutting down wild fruit trees primarily because doing so would compromise the livelihood of

both human and other living creatures that depend on nature's providence for sustenance. In addition, some of nature's endowments such as rivers, big trees and mountains were accorded spiritual significance (Osei, 2006) because, by and large, they were seen as the sanctuary of the spiritual realm and therefore in need of jealous protection. For Kasere (2010), "certain forests were sacred and highly protected ...[implying] the scientific importance of preserving forests for the regulation of hydrological cycles and exchanges of gases and nutrients...Any human being risked disappearing for good if he tried to trespass into the area. Some traditional leaders, particularly chiefs, were buried in these sacred forests, and certain protocol had to be applied before any human encroachment could be allowed." Thus, the religious importance of some of nature's endowments meant that they could not be defiled and tampered with through, among others, wanton exploitation and pollution. Prohibitions against misuse of nature's resources through taboos have been shown to help to foster sustainable use of the environment that ensures biodiversity. Atiti (2010) also subscribes to the notion that "respect for ancestral spirits directly contributed to biodiversity conservation. For instance, plants that existed in shrines were protected, as trees were not felled there. The belief that ancestral spirits lived in caves and rock shelters among some communities; assured conservation of biodiversity, where such physical structures were found. The landscape and trees in such sites were protected against destruction. Trees that were regarded as sacred or ceremonial were never used for any purpose. In many local communities, all big trees were respected and large forests were regarded as sacred." Thus, taboos are among a number of well-thought out strategies among the Shona and other African societies of sustainable (Chigidi, 2009) management of nature's resources for the sake of the present generations and posterity. Thus, taboos are among a number of strategies used by the Shona to foster sustainable use of the environment and to ensure biodiversity.

Even though some fear-inducing 'lies' are used as a deterrent to those who have a penchant to exploit nature's resources in an unsustainable way, the real reason behind such prohibition is the desire that ensure a more responsible use of nature's resources. Kasere (2010) rightly asserts that "long before Dr David Livingstone had set foot in Southern Africa, Zimbabweans had cultural links with their environment second to that of no other known culture in the world. They had a distinct culture of conservation overseen by the chief, in a *tete-à-tete* with the great Shona spirit Mhondoro. From childhood, everyone was taught both the material and spiritual value of trees, forests, animals, water, snakes, birds and all other natural resources." Thus, unwarranted cutting down of trees and exploitation of other endowments of nature was not acceptable for conservation purposes as well as for religious reasons. Where earthly police have proved to be incapable of enforcing sustainable use of nature's resources, taboos through their fear-inducing mechanisms that rope the spiritual world have proved to be a lifelong panacea to the human-directed threat to biodiversity and sustainable use of nature's resources thereof.

Even though natural resources in the traditional Shona societies and other African social groupings suffer the fate of “the tragedy of the commons”, such common ownership, contrary to common notion that it breeds irresponsibility in resource utilization, has proved to be a panacea to unsustainable use of nature’s resources since the communal eye as reflected in prohibitions contained in taboos serve as a decisive deterrent to irresponsible exploitation of the environment. Careless use of nature’s resources reflects badly on the offender’s character and this has unpleasant consequences on the offender because nature as conceived in the African cosmology has a spiritual dimension. Violation of the avoidance rules attract both earthly and spiritual punishments that vary with the nature and degree of the offence. Another factor that cemented sustainable use of the environment is totemism whereby human clans are identified with a particular totem. Kasere (2010) reckons that “although the system was not protectionist par excellence, these totemic groups represented interest groups for their respective animals and could not stand total depletion or abuse. Western animal rights groups; who from their well-ventilated animal-free offices, shout their worry for aesthetic reasons that they have more concern for wildlife than do Zimbabweans; should be reminded that that of wildlife in this country had far more to do with the belief system of indigenous people who associated their survival with that of certain species. They can never be considered less caring than foreigners about the extinction of wildlife.” These totems forbid the killing of certain wild life species that represent certain people’s totem. Thus, the systems of totems help in ensuring biodiversity and responsible use of nature’s resources.

The threat of punishment as contained in taboos makes the would-be offenders reconsider their decision because of the severity of the punishment that goes with violating certain taboos. In this regard, “punishment for violating the cultural environmental laws in Zimbabwe before colonialism was extremely severe. As the sovereign and overall custodian of the environment, the chief executed his divine right to safeguard the environment with a strong hand” (Kasere, 2010). With the environment viewed in its totality as a common heritage that is indispensable for the survival of humanity, no one had unrestricted freedom to exploit the environment with impunity to the disadvantage of all. Since nature’s resources are communally owned, each and everyone has a responsibility to safeguard the environment “...and therefore had an interest in the behavior of others. To make matters worse, everyone knew that the invisible Mhondoro [lion] spirit watched over their behavior, and deviants risked a series of misfortunes or provoking a natural disaster that would affect the entire community if they lacked observance” (Kasere, 2010). In this regard, the spiritual flavor that is associated with Shona taboos assist in fostering sustainable use of the environment. Mhondoro (lion) spirit is a revered Shona territorial spirit (Bourdillon, 1987) that is believed to have dominion over a larger area and the anger that is brought about by this spirit is analogous to that of a lion that roars with death-inducing thunder. Fear of reprisal from the Mhondoro that is

consequent upon violation of certain taboos provide decisive checks and balances to those who may be tempted to so act in a manner that negates the sustainable use of the environment. Through use of taboos that act as mechanisms of frightening members of society from behaving in certain ways that they deem to be socially unacceptable, the Shona and other African societies have succeeded in influencing the behavior of their members in a desirable way.

THE QUESTION OF TRUTH IN SHONA TABOOS

What is implicit in the Shona taboos are their epistemic and moral aspects laced in a thoroughly paternalistic thinking. Shona taboos give knowledge of what constitute good and bad human behavior. According to Shona ethics as reflected in taboos, people must know that good human behavior leads to social acceptance and appreciation of one's commendable disposition by everyone who interacts with this person. On the other hand, a person who is disposed to act in a vicious way is despised by society because almost always his actions are anti-social. Thus, through knowledge of taboos, people come to know of the right character traits to uphold and inculcate and the bad character traits to avoid and drop.

Taboos are recounted to the young as part of their moral education. They are paternalistic in that they, by and large, attempt to prevent people from engaging in activities that are anti-social and, therefore, immoral. Thus, through the knowledge of the good, one becomes well-disposed to act virtuously and through knowledge of the vices; one becomes disposed to almost always avoid exhibiting moral decadence through his actions.

However, one may question the morality of Shona taboos as a means of influencing right conduct in moral agents and avoiding bad traits. It can be argued that the knowledge as contained in Shona taboos is traditional knowledge in that it satisfies the belief condition. The apprentices of this knowledge are supposed to take it without questioning its truth- value and justification. By and large, such knowledge very much falls short of knowledge as conceptualized in the Western philosophical tradition where it is defined as justified true belief. Such a definition of knowledge finds inspiration from Plato's *Theaetetus* (Potter, 1987). For a belief to be regarded as a piece of knowledge, it must be true and warranted by sufficient and relevant evidence. However, the question of the truth and justification conditions in Shona taboos seem not to be important, perhaps, because the quest of truth telling and furnishing of evidence is not important here, but what is important is that people are sufficiently discouraged from engaging in anti-social behavior.

Shona taboos are obsessed with instilling fear in moral agents so that they do not perform certain actions. The fear element is at the expediency of truth telling. Gelfand (1979) notes that "many avoidance rules [are] enforced; some of the

consequences of breaking them [are] believed by everyone, but others [are] empty threats employed to discipline children. Those feared most and therefore obeyed [are] the ones that [threaten] death to the people who [break] them.” However, the supposed ‘emptiness’ of such ‘threats’ is not apparent among the Shona because if people were to ‘know’ that they are but just empty threats, they would not abide by them. Hence, they would cease to be effective moral tools. For instance, when a Shona taboo says that if you sit on the road, you develop boils on the buttocks, truth as it is generally understood is not being told because there is no relationship whatsoever between the biological causes of boils and the action of sitting on the road. Though the Shona acknowledge the actuality that every effect has a cause, upon philosophical analysis, the cause-effect relationships as reflected in taboos seem to be loose. Thus, the failure as exhibited in Shona taboos, to tell the true consequences of certain actions may be seen as an instance of moral mis-education in that the true consequences of certain actions are substituted for those that instill fear and discipline thereof. This might have tragic consequences to the acquisition of indubitable and infallible knowledge of the consequences of engaging in certain actions.

Telling moral apprentices fear-inducing taboos may achieve the desired result of influencing their moral decisions in the desired fashion, but that would not improve their moral knowledge in the true sense because falsehoods can never be termed knowledge in the strictest sense. The tendency is, therefore, that falsehoods become institutionalized to the extent that they are taken as the truth as it may be passed on from generation to generation as knowledge. The consequences of some taboos have become so entrenched in people’s minds such that they now believe them beyond any reasonable doubt. For instance, the common consequence of the taboo that if you pip on women who are naked you will develop pimples is widely accepted. So, if one were seen with pimples on his eyes, people would strongly believe that he has done the uncouth action of peeping at naked women. Therefore, upon seeing such a person, they would automatically doubt his moral uprightness. Thus, such education that informs its apprentices that the presence of pimples on one’s eye lids is a result of the immoral act of peeping on women who are naked is not only unethical, but also prevents moral apprentices from knowing the true consequences of performing given actions. There is a sense in which taboos can be seen as contradicting the Shona cardinal virtue of truth-telling (*kutaura chokwadi*) in that moral apprentices are not told the truth about the consequences of certain behaviors, but those consequences that would make a person feel totally discouraged from acting thus. From a tender age, children are taught about the badness of lying (*kunyepa*) and the one who commits this vice is heavily punished. The Shona, however, believe that truth-telling is situational and contextual in that there are certain cases where truth-telling is moral and others when it is immoral. In light of these exceptions, therefore, there is nothing strange or immoral for the Shona to falsify the consequences of certain behaviors if doing so leads to desirable

behavioral changes among human beings. Despite the apparent mis-education that is characteristic of taboos, members of the Shona society still cling on to such a clever way of fostering desirable behavior in people.

According Meade (1930) as quoted by Chigidi (2009): To respect taboo was a duty towards society, because whoever broke it caught the taboo contagion and transmitted it to everyone and everything he came into contact with. Thus it behoved the community to enjoin respect for taboo, and even more, it behoved the individual to avoid contact with things taboo, otherwise his infraction of this potentially conventional inhibition recoiled upon him, in particular, with deadly severity. Defenders of Shona taboos would say that the reason why the correct consequences of performing certain actions are substituted for the fear-inducing ones is that since these taboos are primarily meant for the young, they must be crafted and presented in such a manner that would totally discourage one from performing certain actions for the fear of some nasty consequences thereof. Thus, the one who steals other people's crops (kuba zvirimwa zvevamwe) feels the moral pressure to avoid doing so because if he thus acts, he risks developing an extraordinarily big stomach that is an embarrassment in the public. Thus, this common consequence of stealing instills fear into the would-be thief such that he would desist from doing so.

Though the implicit moral lesson in this taboo is that the thief risks being harmed and despised by his victims and the community in general for his anti-social acts, a morally frightening consequence is given in order to ensure correct behavior that extols the safety of private property. Stealing (kuba) is a serious moral defect that is highly despised such that a concoction called rukwa is used to punish the thief. It is believed that rukwa causes the thief and whoever would have consumed the stolen crops to, among other effects, die or become deformed. For Gelfand (1973), if the thief and his family members "...eat any of the crops to which the medicine (rukwa) has been applied, a thief and his family would develop swollen abdomens or burning red mouths." Thus, the use of rukwa is meant to guard against bad deeds among members of a given society.

Though not all crops are protected by rukwa, the Shona generalize that whoever steals crops risks developing an extraordinarily big tummy or red mouths. In this taboo, it can be seen that the common consequence and the true consequence are loosely in agreement. The common consequence has a tendency of universalizing the result of the character defect of stealing to include all instances of stealing. This, to some extent, shows that not all Shona taboos are totally instances of moral mis-education. Some taboos' common consequences and true consequences tend to loosely agree. Therefore, even though most Shona taboos seem to lead to moral mis-education, what is important is that they endeavor to inculcate the correct character dispositions in their apprentices and discourages bad character disposition. Thus, the common thread of Shona taboos is that they aim towards shaping the conduct of people in order to make them worthy members of society.

Conclusively, it is noted that Shona taboos are meant to instill correct dispositions in people through fear-inducing moral sanctions. In addition to that, even though Shona taboos have limitations in that they do not disclose the true consequences of certain human character defects, the most important aspect of these taboos is to inculcate commendable character traits in their apprentices that would make them worthy members of society that would not only behave in a desirable way towards fellow human beings, but also relate to the environment in a manner that embodies respect for biodiversity as well as sustainable exploitation of nature's resources. Shona taboos provide prohibitions that forbid people from behaving in such manners that are a threat to the welfare and wellbeing of fellow human beings and the rest of the environment. Even though taboos foster commendable character traits among people through threat of severe reprisals for the ones who violate them, they have desirable utility because they help to keep the wicked in check. In this regard, though the means of enforcing desirable behavior among people are morally questionable, the end justifies the means.

c) The role of the chief and headman

The chief and the headman were very central in the religious, political and social arena of the Karanga society before the coming of the Christian missionaries. Among the Karanga the chief was

known as *Vasheor Mambo*. He worked very closely with the headman who was popularly known as

Sadunhu. Right at the bottom of this social hierarchy was the *kraal/village head* known as *Sabhuku*.

Of all these three the Chief was a very important person in the traditional Karanga society because

he was dealing with all social affairs of the community at large. Bourdillon (1990:109) argues that

Karanga Chiefs are often nominated by descendants of senior branches of the chiefly family which have been eliminated from

the chiefly succession. The Chief was traditionally guardian of the

fundamental values of *upenyu* (life) and *samba* (strength, vitality, and wellbeing). Life comes from

the land of which the Chief is the owner and strength and power comes from the Chief's status and

his accession rituals. Both life and strength are necessary for the prosperity of the people. The

Chief is responsible in the prosperity of his people and particularly for the land and its produce.

Thus drought may be blamed on the general incompetency of the Chief or on the fact that political figures receive the burnt of any dissatisfaction felt by their subjects.

In the traditional Karangas society the Chief was responsible for providing advice on economic, marital, religious, and political welfare of his territory. For instance, he could intervene in marital disputes such as divorce. But other marital disputes such as quarrellings and fighting were solved at family level by family members. If the members of the family failed to resolve the dispute they approached the kraal head and latter on to the headman and lastly to the chief. As a result, social disputes may affect children and they find cases they report to the chief.

Another duty of the traditional Chief in the Karangas society was to provide the link between people and the ancestor of the tribe on account of their inherited position. It was commonly believed that the ancestor of the Chief should have direct contact with ancestral spirits of every family.

There were so many social norms and values in the traditional Karangas society. Some people violate these cultural values and laws of the land and these cases were reported to the chief. For example, a father might be caught having sexual relationship with his daughter (makunakuna) or incest the matter was taken straight to the Chief or reside over such cases.

It should be noted at this juncture that in the traditional Karangas society, incest (makunakuna) was allowed especially in Chivi and Mwenezi. But this was supposed to be done privately in order to facilitate bumper harvest. This was done through a religious ritual known as Divisi that is sex done in the field. Again sex between brother and sister was usually practiced as a medicinal rite if the other one was bitten by a snake called green mamba. Other cases such as sexual abuse (mubobo and chibharo) were also dealt by the chief.

The chief was also responsible for distributing land to the headmen who latter on allocate small piece of land to the kraal head who finally distributed it to family members. Furthermore, the chief was also responsible in other economic matters such as gold panning as well as controlling trade. In connection to this, the rain making rituals were also contacted at the Chief's homestead if there was no other place. He gave instructions to the rain messengers (Nyusa) or ordained other religious functionaries to perform rain making ritual at Mabweadziva in the Matop hills (a religious

shrine known as Matonjeni) (Daneel, 1970).

In terms of hierarchy the chief had the same position with God (Zame). The social hierarchy was like a ladder. Thus the machinda or junior chiefs were equated to the ancestral spirits. The chief was as very important even his death was not allowed to be reported immediately because he was regarded as the great mountain. His death was pronounced after one month from the date of death. Among the Karangapeople the chief was regarded as immortal, powerful and influential. This is why people embalm him after his death. The Chief therefore, had special burial and people were not allowed to cry. As a result, the Chief had a special divine power among the Karangapeople.

The Ward (Dunhu) The ward consists of a number of villages. Rivers, hilltops and streams mark ward boundaries. These boundaries are well known. A headman called sadunhu heads the ward. He is a member of the senior homes of the chief's lineage. His functions are similar to those of the leader of the village. He also presides over the court (dare) and initiates rain asking rituals in consultation with the village headman.¹⁵

The Chiefdom/Territory (Nyika) The chiefdom is the widest territorial and political unit. Bourdillon is right when he notes that the boundaries of chiefdom are clearly defined by natural features such as hills and rivers well known to its inhabitants.¹⁶ For the Shona, like most people in Africa, land has primarily a value linked to a tribe, its chief and the spirits of their ancestors. This is why in Shona the chief (mambo) is called 'owner of the land' (muridzi we nyika). Nyika is the Shona name commonly used for land.¹⁷ This ownership of the land by the chief is a result of his supposed connections with mythological founder-ancestors of his chiefdom. It is the ancestors who are believed to have chosen him and gave power and authority over his subjects.¹⁸ So the chief is in his position by virtue of his relationship with the ancestors, who appointed him and supports him. The real owners of the land are however the ancestral spirits of the dead tribal rulers particularly those of the mythical founder-ancestors of the chiefdom. The chief is the senior descendant of the ancestral spirits who founded the chiefdom. He is both a political and a religious figure. The role of the chief is the same as those of village and ward headmen differing in the chief's greater authority. Traditionally he is the final court of appeal. He is responsible for propitiating his clan ancestors. He is at the apex of the tribe's ritual hierarchy. Overall the chief is sacred.¹⁹ His authority is linked to the land and the spirits that own it.

CONCEPT OF HEALTH AND HEALING METHODS IN INDIGENOUS RELIGION

Health in IR refers to the total well being of an individual

It really has a strong emphasis on the absence of disease. It is important however to note that in IR , the health of an individual isn't limited to the absence of disease alone . As a matter of fact a healthy person is a person who is without a disease , is in good relationship with the spiritual world and in harmony with fellow human beings in the community

In IR sickness does not come naturally. It have a supernatural origin. This is why when someone is ill the first thing is to consult a diviner to establish the cause of the illness

Thus consulting diviners is the beginning of the healing process and restoration of health in an individual

MEDICAL PRACTITIONERS IN IR

Indigenous medical practitioners are tradition bearers, cultural custodians, transmitters of our hindsight wisdom and the fore bearers to every unborn generation. They constitute one aging and dying human form of a reserve bank of unquestionable indigenous knowledge systems, databank of homespun and proverbial wisdom. Despite them being the reservoirs of indigenous knowledge systems, databases and vicars to cultural motifs, they are double faced in as far as they police relations between and among human beings and the patrons of the spirit world [T. O. Ranger 1967:18]. They have the ability, as a tender bridge between the living and the spirit world, to transverse between the human and spiritual world.

In terms of the Zimbabwean constitution only indigenous medical practitioners and faith healers: **zviporofita** are required to register. To the best of our knowledge indigenous sacred practitioners: **masvikiro/mhondoro** are not registered. Many, if not all are unwilling to be registered in western styled databanks like registers. Herbalists: **godobori**, indigenous non-clinicians: **nechombo/makumbi** and indigenous clinicians/herbalists: **varapi** do not also constitutionally qualify to be registered in terms of the Traditional Medical Practitioners' Act 27:14 of 1996.

Indigenous medical and sacred practitioners are concentrated in rural Zimbabwe where they preside over particular rites. However, they are scattered in the urban areas. Therein, they command a lot of respect. They are vested with unquestionable and boundless repositories of the indigene's homespun wisdom and knowledge

about the primordial state of affairs between the living dead and human society. Since their duty is to gaze into eternal truths and impart the subject knowledge to the human society, they assume the ability to traverse between the spirit and human worlds.

Indigenous medical practitioners are derogatively called **n'angas**. In the Zimbabwean case the term became known as "**n'anga**" which supposedly comes from "**n'a-a**" meaning to bite and "**nga-a**" referring to a long period of the bite. Some indigenous medical practitioners employ one treatment method using their teeth: **kuruma zvitsinga**. We suppose that it was from such an observation that the term **n'anga** was derived.

Types of Indigenous Medical and Sacred Practitioners

There are general practitioners in indigenous medical and sacred practice. They include apprentices, grandaunts: **homwe** in the fraternity and auxiliary staff to indigenous medical practitioners: **makumbi** or **nechombo**. They treat minor illness that required no prognostics. Whenever the client's medical condition is beyond their competence, they refer the client to a specialist.

Some indigenous medical practitioners are specialists on issues related to restitution spirits: **ngozi**. They heal those inflicted by the restitution spirits. They reverse the spiritual and physical effects of restitution spirits, provide placebos or redirect the inflicting spiritual force against the sender: **kudzorera ngozi**. They know various ways of restituting **ngozi**. The best therapy for **ngozi** is to retribute. Proverbial wisdom dictates that **mushonga wengozu kuiripa**: the best way of treating **ngozi** is to pay restitution.

However, bogus specialists consulted about **ngozi** prescribe a goblin: **chikwambo** for self-protection as a stopgap measure. This animate is no good to any family.

Some indigenous medical practitioners are specialists on issues related to post-humous enquiries: **gata**. They interpret causes of the death of the deceased. During their prognostics they become incarnates of the dead and his/her antecessors. They provide information on how the deceased wants the estate distributed and how related rituals have to be enacted. Instructions about **doro rehonye** and **kurova guva** rituals come from this specialist. The specialist has the power to invite: **kuhaka** the spirit of the deceased to dialogue with the living using lots: **hakata**. The Shona people honorify this specialist as **muvuki/mashopeshope**.

Some indigenous medical practitioners are specialists on issues related to

meteorology. They are consulted on weather and climatic predictions and changes biannually. They preside over **mikwerera/mitoro**: rain-inducing (not rain making) ceremonies. The subject specialists live in rain inducing centers. At times, they sojourn to Mabweadziva before the start of the rain reason or whenever rains fail. The journey /is designed to consult with the voice of Mwari. In Matonjeni they ARE provided with detailed interpretations of weather, climatic and rainfall patterns (L. M. Daneel 1973: 27f).

Some indigenous practitioners are specialists on issues related to witchcraft: **uroyi** and cleansing of places: **kuchenura nyika**. They participate in witchcraft espionages when and only when they are invited by the chief: **mambo** or a **sadunhu**: village head. Those identified as witches: **varoyi** in possession of familiars: **zvidhoma** pay a specified number of cattle to the practitioner. These practitioners have a short lifespan given the life-threatening work they do. The specialists in witchcraft related issues are called **tsikamutanda** or **gaurani**.

Some indigenous medical practitioners are specialists in predicting the consulate's future or previous life. These do not use any song, dance etc to get into this mood. They are called **vafemberi**. They smell around the body: **kufemba** of the client either closely or from a distance and start predicting the life of the patient.

"Some indigenous general practitioners are specialists in herbal medicines: **godobori**. Knowledge about specific herbs is restricted to specific families. Other ordinary people could know the herbs through friendship, marriage or medical practice experiences. Mermaids: **njuzu**, at times, train the elected into this profession under water. It is the potential to be possessed that distinguishes them from herbalists.

Today profit minded herbalists partake in unsanctioned street vending. Herbalists, serve for few, are not ZINATHA members. The code of ethics for ZINATHA does allow vending of herbs," said Mbuya Dzamara (Interviewed in Tafara, Harare on 07/03/2008

Functions of Traditional Healers

They preside over chieftainship and governance issues. They are political advisors. The chiefs, village heads respect them. They are sacramental's of the guardians of Zimbabwean geo politics. They lead people to/in war against usurpers of their land rights, as did Nehanda and Chaminuka [D. Lan 1986: 17, T. O. Ranger 1976:56f]. They rarely administer herbs except snuff: **bute**. Those that administer herbs do so out of the knowledge they assumed before succumbing to this vocation. The greatest spirits of the land possesses them. This specialist is called **svikiro** or **mhondoro**".

- They are spiritual consultants endowed with extra ordinary knowledge; they are guardians of esoteric knowledge (beyond the ordinary). They preside over most traditional rituals offering guidance for the proper execution of rituals.
- Because IRs do not have written scripture of their own they are not concerned about orthodoxy (RIGHT BELIEF), they put more emphasis on orthopraxis (RIGHT ACTION). Knowledge is collected and stored in the memory of Africans. Traditional healers are the Reserve section of IR. They are the intellectual hub During k u r o v a g u v a ceremony consultancy services are sought from the n'anga
- Chavunduka says that the Traditional healers do detective work particularly recovery of stolen property. They also establish the cause of death/postmortem:a person does not die,they are killed,
- He also regards them as marriage advisors: they can prescribe love portions/husband taming herbs (m u p f u h w i r a). For men they prescribe m i s h o n g a y e m i s a n a to enhance sexual potency/ to enhance sexual perfection,
- They can cleanse misfortunes (k u g e z a m i n y a m a) thereby enhancing chances of getting a marriage partner,
- They are political advisors to the chiefs. They can prescribe “ c h i v h u n o ” (m a f u t a e s h u m b a). This enhances one's capacity to instil fear and respect in their enemies

Traditional Diagnosis

Since the Shona experience illness and disease as a threat to their lives, diagnosis, centred on the *n'anga*, is crucial to identify the cause and prescribe appropriate medication. However diagnosis is not the monopoly of the *n'anga* alone. Elders of a community are also consulted on the source of disease because of their wisdom and experience. Also mothers have the ability to discern the cause of an illness in their own children. So these practitioners have a wide range of methods at their disposal.

Diagnosis by the N'anga

The *n'anga* is consulted in cases of grave illnesses, especially when it is believed that spirits are responsible for the problem. So the *n'anga* is expected to discover why the spirits afflict the victim with illness and which remedy may be prescribed. The *n'anga* therefore employs several different methods of diagnosis.

1 Possession

Possession is one significant means of diagnosis used by the *n'anga*. The diviner

performs a ritual involving snuff taking. He puts on symbolic clothes, either black for an ancestral spirit or red for *shavi* spirit. Other items include animal skin and bird feathers and he wields in his right hand a spear, walking stick or hand axe. The hide of a lion or leopard serves as a mat. All such items are an expression of power. In the midst of singing and dancing, an ancestral or alien spirit, which is causing illness in a patient, is induced to possess him and explain the reason for the affliction.

In possession, the *n'anga* may speak in the voice of the invading spirit that is often interpreted by an assistant. Meanwhile the afflicted person claps his hands and listens attentively to the assistant as sign of respect for the spirit.

2 Dice

The most common style of diagnosis is throwing *hakata* (dice), usually made from a bone, wood and other materials and has small images and symbols on them. Bones have different names like *Mabwe, Gata, Chirume, Chitokwadzima, Kwami, and Zunga*. These are thrown by the *n'anga* and have different meanings, which he interprets depending on the way they fall. It is also believed that by throwing the dice, the *n'anga* establishes contact with spirits.

3 Special Objects

Another common diagnostic method is the use of special medicated objects like a talking calabash, in which the invading spirit speaks through; snuff to coerce the spirit into talking; ox tail to sprinkle herbs and water to reflect the source of trouble.

4 Dreams

Dreams are another means of diagnosis available to the *n'anga*. He prepares himself with certain rituals before going to sleep in order to read and interpret dreams properly. He puts on his ritual attire and pours snuff on the pillow, accompanied by incantations. The ritual is intended to establish contact with spirits. The diagnosis does not take place at any time of the day but only at dawn or dusk, special times for effective communication with the spiritual world. Some examples of dreams and their meanings used in diagnosing an illness are as follows:

Whirlwind signifies the onset of mental illness; donkeys, snakes and meat indicate witchcraft or sorcery. Someone falling in fire or in other perilous situations indicates illness and misfortune. If a person is chased and bitten in a dream, the part that is bitten will

succumb to disease (Private interview, 4 May 1990).

So the Shona strongly believe that dreams forewarn or indicate that illness and disease and even misfortune and death will occur. The striking factor in the reading of dreams is that they are believed to come from the ancestral spirits who, when contacted, reveal the cause of illness.

5 Omens

Observation and interpretation of omens is another method used by the *n'anga* in diagnosis. Omens are manifestations by spirits in nature and are perceived as reliable and consistent signs of illness, misfortune and death. The Shona believe in good and bad omens and these are commonly found in the presence of actions or animals and birds, which must be interpreted by an expert. While good omens bring good health and well being, bad ones indicate trouble. For instance an owl hooting or jackal crying near a homestead; the sight of a blind, or file snake, slender mongoose or two cats mating; falling star or new moon facing left, all indicate illness and bad experiences like witchcraft, misfortune and death.

6 Ordeal

The final method used by the *n'anga* is the ordeal. This method of diagnosis is applied when witchcraft is suspected as the cause of illness and disease. In the ordeal, the *n'anga* administers poisonous substances to a group of people. While innocent people become nauseous from the poison, the witch will remain unaffected. So through this method, which involves an experiment with life, the *n'anga* not only verifies the cause of disease but also proceeds to smite the culprit.

Traditional Healing

Treatments

Treatment of illness and disease among the Shona varies according to the category of illness. Serious illness is treated in various ways, which include herbal treatment, extraction of disease-causing objects, and exorcism. Minor diseases like headaches or stomach problems are healed by medicinal treatment.

Chronic illness and disease like *nhova* (fontanel) in children is attributed to witches and can be treated by a plant called *chifumuro*, which means exposing to shame. The medicine is tied around the waist or neck of the child and in that way resists or neutralises the aggressive nature of the illness. In a way *chifumuro* is both curative and preventive.

At times when the symptoms of fontanel such as vomiting and sores on the upper part of the mouth appear, then leaves of *mubvamaropa* (bloodletting) tree are burnt. The ashes are mixed with fat, which is obtained from the seeds of *mufute* (castor oil) tree, and the mixture is rubbed on the affected part of the head. Whilst blood drains the disease, oil soothes pain.

The fontanel can also be cured using *chifuro-furo*, a thorny tree. Roots are taken and pounded and mixed with water. A stick with two branches then stirs the mixture until it produces foam. The foam is rubbed against the head of the child using the stick. The child is then healed. Alternatively healing is made up of symbolic action. A chick is taken and used by an elder member of the family to scratch the head of the patient. Scratching symbolically eliminates disease. An appeal is made to the ancestors to effect healing.

One serious disease that affects children is inflammation of the navel. It is detected by the appearance of blackish blood vessels at the navel of the child. Caused by evil forces, this disease is definitely lethal if not given due attention. However taking *chifumuro* can prevent the disease. It is healed with bitter juices of *nhundugwa* (shrub), *gavakava* (aloe) or *mazimbe* (charcoal) mixed with saliva.

Another serious illness called *chipengo* (mental illness) is caused by witchcraft. As regards the healing of this disease,

Chirovadundundu herb is mixed with seeds of *mufute*. The mixture is put on

glowing amber and the patient is ordered to smoke. Alternatively *chikonye*

(worm) of a sheep is crushed and applied on incisions cut on the forehead of the

patient. The patient also takes some herbs. All this consolidates curative

power (Private Interview, 10 September 1989).

A physical disorder caused by sorcery, *chitsinga*, is healed by the use of *mutarara* tree. The medicine may also be used as a preventive when the victim takes an active part and either puts it in the hair before going to sleep or patches it at the door entrance. This is meant to confuse and thus drive away the witch.

The Shona also grapple with *biripiri* (measles), a killer disease. A child with this disease is cautioned to stay indoors all the time to minimise its transmission. Treatment of this disease entails confession of guilt especially where adultery is suspected as the cause. Also *chifumuro* (the exposer) and *hazvieri* (without restrictions) herbs go a long way to reverse the symptoms.

Sex-related diseases also haunt the Shona. These include *jeko* (menstruation pain) *rubaya* (continual ill health) *musana* (back) and *runyoka* (venereal disease). Most of the diseases are caused by violation of socio-moral norms in society. Menstruation pain can be cured as follows:

Sadza is cooked with herbs. Then the cooking pot is overturned. A knife is

used to cut *sadza* into pieces. The patient is ordered to eat a piece and

throw the next piece away in turn. The process is repeated several times.

Alternatively *jekacheka* (sharp bladed grass) is mixed with some medicine. The

mixture is dried and crushed into powder. The powder is put in porridge. The

pot that cooks the porridge is smashed at the rubbish pit. The porridge is

taken regularly until the patient recovers (Private interview, 4 January 1990).

Rubaya (continual ill health) is a male disease, which the Shona perceive as complex and lethal. A man is supposed to have sexual intercourse with his wife after a miscarriage as a matter of priority. Failure to comply incurs *rubaya*. The illness can

be cured by use of unspecified herbs and can be prevented by conformity to custom.

Musana (literally backache, but which alludes to problems of impotence) affects both men and women. For women this problem is healed by *kuuchika*, a form of operation done by an n'anga. Alternatively *ruvande* plant is used for a cure. It is burnt and smoke is allowed to filter through the genitals of a naked woman to effect cure. For men *vhuka-vhuka* (wake up) 'aphrodisiacs' are taken to boost stimulation and enhance reproduction.

Runyoka (venereal disease) is cured with taking herbs administered by the n'anga. In most cases the culprit is made to pay for *pwanja ruzhowa* (gate crushing) in order to ensure healing or risk death from this disease.

Extraction

The Shona believe that witches and sorcerers can inflict pain. They can also incapacitate the victim and can insert certain items such as insects, worms, eggs, hair and blood into human bodies. Healing is done by a specialist through *kuruma* (biting), *kukwiza* (rubbing), *kuvhiya* (surgery), or *kupfungaidzira* (blowing smoke) on the affected parts of the body. Objects removed are rarely displayed for public viewing lest they turn blind. Extraction of disease-causing objects may supplement herbal treatment.

Exorcism

When a spirit enters into a person and causes serious illness and disease and is identified by a specialist as troublesome then exorcism is used to expel the spirit. Common methods include bloodletting, emetics or purgatives and sniffing.

Medicine

There are minor illnesses and diseases which affect the Shona that are believed to be natural and whose cause is not necessarily attributed to the spirits, witches or sorcery or contempt of socio-moral laws. Such diseases as headaches, flu and stomach problems are usually healed through home curative medicines administered by the elders of the family. The herb *karibekandu* is most effective.

Therefore the Shona traditional healing system utilises rituals and treatments administered by specialist practitioners to prevent and cure illness and disease and restore health.

COMMUNITY AND SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

1 STEWARDSHIP

2 RESPECT FOR COMMON DIGNITY

3 RESPECT FOR LIFE

4 RESPECT FOR COMMUNITY PROPERTY eg FLORA AND FAUNA, WILDLIFE, WATER SOURCES AND COMMUNITY RESOURCES

5 RESPECT OF COMMUNITY RIGHTS

6 ADVANCING THE INTERESTS OF THE COMMON GOOD

7 RESPECTING COMMUNITY DECISION

TENENTS OF JUDAISM

COVENANT AND LAW

The term covenant refers to the sacred agreement between God and a person or a group of people

Scott V. Johnson etal defined the term covenant as a gracious relationship of love between God and humanity, where God takes initiative by creating the world to be the place where the relationship can be realised

There are two types of covenants, the **conditional and unconditional**.

A conditional covenant is an agreement which includes the two parties cementing the relationship whilst **the unconditional covenant** refers to the agreement of two parties whereby only one has something to do whilst the other party nothing is required .

The Bible speaks of seven different covenants, four of which (Abrahamic, Palestinian, Mosaic, Davidic) God made with the nation of Israel. Of those four, three are unconditional in nature; that is, regardless of Israel's obedience or disobedience, God still will fulfill these covenants with Israel. One of the covenants, the Mosaic Covenant, is conditional in nature. That is, this covenant will bring either blessing or cursing depending on Israel's obedience or disobedience. Three of the covenants (Adamic, Noahic, New) are made between God and mankind in general, and are not limited to the nation of Israel.

The Adamic Covenant can be thought of in two parts: the Edenic Covenant (innocence) and the Adamic Covenant (grace) (Genesis 3:16-19). The Edenic Covenant is found in Genesis 1:26-30; 2:16-17. The Edenic Covenant outlined man's responsibility toward creation and God's directive regarding the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The Adamic Covenant included the curses pronounced against mankind for the sin of Adam and Eve, as well as God's provision for that sin (Genesis 3:15).

The Noahic Covenant was an unconditional covenant between God and Noah (specifically) and humanity (generally). After the Flood, God promised humanity that He would never again destroy all life on earth with a Flood (see Genesis chapter 9). God gave the rainbow as the sign of the covenant, a promise that the entire earth would never again flood and a reminder that God can and will judge sin (2 Peter 2:5).

Abrahamic Covenant (Genesis 12:1-3, 6-7; 13:14-17; 15; 17:1-14; 22:15-18). In this covenant, God promised many things to Abraham. He personally promised that He would make Abraham's name great (Genesis 12:2), that Abraham would have numerous physical descendants (Genesis 13:16), and that he would be the father of a multitude of nations (Genesis 17:4-5). God also made promises regarding a nation called Israel. In fact, the geographical boundaries of the Abrahamic Covenant are laid out on more than one occasion in the book of Genesis (12:7; 13:14-15; 15:18-21). Another provision in the Abrahamic Covenant is that the families of the world will be blessed through the physical line of Abraham (Genesis 12:3; 22:18). This is a reference to the Messiah, who would come from the line of Abraham.

Palestinian Covenant (Deuteronomy 30:1-10). The Palestinian Covenant, or Land Covenant, amplifies the land aspect that was detailed in the Abrahamic Covenant. According to the terms of this covenant, if the people disobeyed, God would cause

them to be scattered around the world (Deuteronomy 30:3-4), but He would eventually restore the nation (verse 5). When the nation is restored, then they will obey Him perfectly (verse 8), and God will cause them to prosper (verse 9).

Mosaic Covenant (Deuteronomy 11; et al.). The Mosaic Covenant was a conditional covenant that either brought God's direct blessing for obedience or God's direct cursing for disobedience upon the nation of Israel. Part of the Mosaic Covenant was the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20) and the rest of the Law, which contained over 600 commands—roughly 300 positive and 300 negative. The history books of the Old Testament (Joshua–Esther) detail how Israel succeeded at obeying the Law or how Israel failed miserably at obeying the Law. Deuteronomy 11:26-28 details the blessing/cursing motif.

Davidic Covenant (2 Samuel 7:8-16). The Davidic Covenant amplifies the “seed” aspect of the Abrahamic Covenant. The promises to David in this passage are significant. God promised that David's lineage would last forever and that his kingdom would never pass away permanently (verse 16). Obviously, the Davidic throne has not been in place at all times. There will be a time, however, when someone from the line of David will again sit on the throne and rule as king. This future king is Jesus (Luke 1:32-33).

New Covenant (Jeremiah 31:31-34). The New Covenant is a covenant made first with the nation of Israel and, ultimately, with all mankind. In the New Covenant, God promises to forgive sin, and there will be a universal knowledge of the Lord. Jesus Christ came to fulfill the Law of Moses (Matthew 5:17) and create a new covenant between God and His people. Now that we are under the New Covenant, both Jews and Gentiles can be free from the penalty of the Law. We are now given the opportunity to receive salvation as a free gift (Ephesians 2:8-9).

Within the discussion of the biblical covenants, there are a few issues that Christians are not agreed upon. First, some Christians think that all of the covenants are conditional in nature. If the covenants are conditional, then Israel failed miserably at fulfilling them. Others believe that the unconditional covenants have yet to be totally fulfilled and, regardless of Israel's disobedience, will come to fruition sometime in the future. Second, how does the church of Jesus Christ relate to the covenants? Some believe that the church fulfills the covenants and God will never deal with Israel again. This is called replacement theology and has little scriptural evidence. Others believe that the church initially or partially will fulfill these covenants. While

many of the promises towards Israel are still in the future, many believe that the church shares in the covenants in some way. Others believe that the covenants are for Israel and for Israel alone, and that the church has no part in these covenants

PROPHECY AND ITS ORIGIN

ORIGINS OF PROPHECY IN ISRAEL

PROPHECY

Because of the weaknesses of the tribal confederacy Israelites were feeling insecure, politically and they wanted to be like other nations. Indirectly this was tantamount to rebellion against Yahweh. In fact this was an admission that Yahweh was no longer a sufficient king. In this light the representatives of the old order interpret it as infidelity. Samuel was aware of the religious implications and warned people of the results of lack of faith. Prophets saw the monarchy in an ambivalent light, that is, as both divinely sanctioned and as well as a rebellion against God. (1 Samuel 10:17-27, 27:12; 28:3ff).

Prophets viewed the monarchy as a rebellion against Yahweh. The Israelites were turning into a secular state. Prophecy was responsible for the transition from the tribal confederacy to the monarchy. Samuel is an important figure in this regard. He is the one who anointed the first king of Israel (Saul).

Before the monarchy judges had combined role of priests and prophets. The rise of the monarchy represents a break and even a reaction to this long standing tradition. Judges were charismatic leaders whereas kings apart from Saul and David were not. As such there was need for someone who would advise the king on religious matters. So prophets who were prepared to proclaim that the king has been divinely chosen and those who had divine support. So they act as revolutionaries and were responsible for dynastic disruptions, for example Ahijah led the division of the monarchy and Elisha plotted the downfall of the Omri dynasty. The prophets believed the monarchy to be the betrayal of Yahweh as the sovereign ruler (1 Samuel 9:8). According to this view prophecy tried to force charismatic leadership into the rule of the northern kingdom during the time in which charismatic rule was no longer an adequate answer in which Israel was facing. Israel was involved in whirlpool of international political events and hence the need for dynastic rule to cope with the external pressure. So there were clashes between the prophets who wanted the continuation of the old order in which they were superior and the Israelites, kings in particular who were no longer concerned with spiritual success but political one. When kingship was established in Israel much of the responsibilities of the former covenant representatives were assumed by kings. However the kings were not allowed to become the official spokespersons for the Deity. For the prophets kingship was too dangerous an

institution to go unchecked by tenets of the covenant faith, for example David was not permitted to build a house of Yahweh in Jerusalem (2 Samuel 7). So prophecy during this time acted as king's conscience that is to maintain checks and balances on the powers of the kings and royal officials.

As God's representatives prophets would admonish and reprove, denounce prevailing sins, threaten with terror of divine judgement and call people to repentance and proclaim Yahweh's divine assurance, for example the famous Davidic promise(2 Samuel 7). In fact they constantly reminded kings and people in general that their real ruler was Yahweh whose demands they had to meet.

Prophets also functioned as court officials who were consulted when great events were impending, mostly before and during wars, for example Ahab and Jehoshaphat tried to ensure victory over the Arameans at Ramoth-gilead, Jehoshaphat wished to hear the word of Yahweh, he summoned 400 prophets (1Kings 22). Thus when entering an important undertaking the kings constantly apply to the prophets for a word from God. David had Nathan, Rehoboam had Shemaiah and Jeroboam had Ahijah as their advisors.

However it was not always the case that prophets were for the kings. The prophet's independence of the kings might make him sensor the king's action and might be a source of danger for he was in no doubt as the divine nature of his authority and the people thought the same. Ahab hated Micaiah for he never prophesied good concerning him and Jeroboam who was designated king by a prophet was also rejected by a prophet (1 Kings 14:7). Prophets reaffirmed Yahweh's sovereign stay in the political sphere in which Israel lived.

Prophecy grew with the rise of the monarchy, though some scholars like F.M. Cross argue that, prophecy started with kingship and died together in exile. It's likely that there was prophecy earlier than the monarchy (1Samuel 3). It's most likely that these prophets were taken for granted. They never delivered any oracles; they were only there to boost the morale during holy wars. They were acting as army band. So the prophetic movement assured a more prominent role during the period of the monarchy when kings set upon thrones of Israel. Prophets became particularly important during this period because of the rise of the evils of the monarchy.

Monarchy contributed certain changes in the life and tradition of Israel, for example access to resources is limited to other people. Stratification of the society led to the exploitation of the poor by the elite, hence social injustice was now rife, for example in the Ahab- Naboth issue Elijah as a prophet intervened and he felt the worship of Yahweh and his exclusive sovereignty over Israel was threatened as never before. So the prophets continuously access to the resources. They were calling for righteousness and justice.

Because of the monarchy there were disastrous foreign alliances which led to apostasy. The Omri dynasty for example had marriage alliance with the Phoenicians. Omri married his son Ahab to Jezebel a foreign wife who initiated the worship of Baal. Elijah came on the scene during this time and is there to maintain the worship of Yahweh, hence the elimination of them and Bethel confused the Israelite Omri dynasty. Foreign alliances were tantamount to apostasy, for example Jeroboam 1 and the calf worship at Dan and Bethel confused the Israelites hence he is regarded as the worst king in the history of Israel. So prophets were there to combat idolatry.

Definition of the prophecy .

- According to B. W Anderson, the English word prophet comes from the Greek word *prophetes* which literally means "one who speaks for another especially for a deity."
- The corresponding Hebrew word *nabi* is apparently related to the Akkadian verb *nabu* meaning to call, to announce, to name.
- In view of this, prophets were regarded as persons through whom God speak to the people.
- Was called to be God's spokesperson, they received the promise from God's "word" Jer 1:9. As would be discussed later, prophets in Israel used the messenger style which was well known in the ancient times.
- In line with this, Claus Westermann argues that, in Israel, prophets were God's Messengers. Prophets believed themselves to have been sent by Yahweh. "Go and say to my people ..." (Amos 1:1-3, Jer 2:1-3, Isaiah 45:11-13).
- The nature of Israel religion was monotheistic worship of Yahweh and Yahwism is believed to be a borrowed god from the Father in Law of Moses Jethro and it was his Jethro's religion.
- It is problematic to know when exactly was the name was first used with Abraham or with Moses? If it started with the patriarchs , the problem is that God did not introduced himself to them , thus one can say they were worshipping an unknown god who later introduced himself to Moses.
- For B.W Anderson, "the word Yahweh name from a Hebrew term YHWH refers to a personally divine name of God."
- YHWH is also translated "I AM which connotes personal eternal and all sufficient aspect of God's nature and character."(Ex 3:14). This verse shows that the Hebrews were polytheist especially when the bible say "which god what is his name"
- It can be assumed that God introduced himself to the Hebrews through Moses and not through the Patriarchs. It can also be assumed that the reason why God did introduce himself as "I AM" means that he is an ever-present God as suggested by Ex 3: 12. According to Hill and Walton "I AM in Greek is "*ego eimi ho on*" to suggest that Yahweh is the only God of Israel."

1) Prophecy

- Prophecy in Israel is also believed to be a borrowed phenomenon. This is evidence when dealing with extra biblical material and the archaeological evidence.
- God was believed to be universal and this is testified by the story of Abraham and Abimelech, Balaam a Moabite was used as a vessel of Yahweh (Num 22).
- If God used Abimelech and Balaam, it shows that prophecy was not unique in Israel.
- The other assumption was that, Israelite religion was borrowed and there is also strong evidence that Yahweh was borrowed as previously discussed. This is evidenced in (Ex 18) where we are told that Jethro offered a sacrifice to God and gave advice to Moses on issues of administration
- Jethro was a Midianite where Moses met face to face with God in (Ex 3).
- The God worshipped in Midian was El and Yahweh is called Elohim. From such an assumption, Israel worshipped the borrowed.
- Scholars support this by archaeology and extra-biblical material. However, archaeological evidence is problematic because people with assumptions' want to validate their arguments by stretching it to reach the conclusion.
- Sponsorship is also for such evidence whereby it is the view of the sponsor that will be carried, thus the sponsor is justified.
- In addition, archeological evidence is scant that why it can be stretched. It is not uniform in its findings.
- It is not as clear as the Bible is regarding prophecy. Like archaeological evidence, the Bible has its problems especially in its presentation of the origins, nature and developments of prophecy in Israel.
- Information is not consistent to allow us come with a conclusion as to how and why prophecy originate e.g. Samuel and Kings originally were believed to be one scroll but later were divided into two but both believed to written by Samuel. Today they appear to be one book. If they were written by one man, there should be no contradiction. Later it was discovered that it was not Samuel who wrote because Samuel died in I Sam 12.
- M Noth concludes that 1 and 2 Samuel and 1and 2 Kings belongs to a Deuteronomic School which also wrote Deuteronomy 4ff, Joshua and Judges. The writers had the same idea.
- The problems that we have are that both Samuel and Kings do not show how prophecy originated.
- In 1 Sam 9:9, it shows that there was an evolutionary change from the title of the Seer to the Prophet.
- This story is told by a redactor who lived during a period where a prophet was no longer called a Seer.
- In Hebrew: Seer is *roeh* and prophet is *nabi*.

- 2 Sam 24:11 has a different picture. It says the word of the LORD came to Gad, David's Seer which means which means the word Seer was also in use.
- However, being a prophet does not mean a Seer, but this contradicts with 1 Sam 9:9.
- The question one may ask is, why is there these inconsistencies? As we move to the Canonical era which is far later than the discussed era, Amos is called a Seer by Amaziah (Amos 7:10-14).
- Amos in his presentation says "I am neither a prophet nor a prophet's son" In view of this, a prophet was either a Seer or a prophet's son.
- If this is the case, the bible is consistent.
- While Gad was a Seer, his counterpart Nathan is always called a prophet (2 Sam 12:35) implying that a prophet and a Seer are different.
- As we move to 1 and 2 Kings, we find almost a different picture from Samuel. 1 Kings 17:18, we are introduced to another title *Ish-Elohim* (Man of God) referring to Elijah. The question is, is the prophet also a man of God?
- In (1 Kings 18:20-22) Elijah is also referred as a prophet. It is not clear from the Bible whether the two means the same.
- The disciples of Elisha are called Sons of prophet implying that Elisha was a *nabi* not a man of God.
- In (2 Kings 6:1ff), Elisha's disciples are called sons of prophets. With such inconsistencies we cannot wholly depend on the bible on the nature, origins and the developments of prophecy in Israel.
- The Bible presents a better picture unlike archaeological evidence.
- Those scholars who use the bible use it as a basis and those who use archaeological evidence use it to justify themselves.

Given this situation, we need to look into the origin of prophecy in and outside Israel.

- There are two theories:
 - a) Prophecy as a borrowed phenomenon and
 - b) Prophecy as a unique feature Israel.

ORIGINS OF PROPHECY

THEORIES

- 1 Prophecy as borrowed: legend of Wen Amon, Zimri lim, Stelle of Zark.
- 2 Prophecy as unique feature of Israel.

PROBLEMS CONCERNING THE ORIGINS

- We do not seem to have enough sources to allow us to reconstruct the history of the phenomenon, and in particular we do not have extra biblical material with which to compare and contrast the biblical material that we

have. So the bible remains our primary source.

- The material that is present is not homogenous enough to allow us to make a smooth reconstruction of the origins of Israelite prophecy.
- We do not know whether the information we have about prophecy is not a reflection of a changing situation in the life of Israel.
- We are not sure whether the labels we have are not of self-understanding of other groups. Sometimes we are given labels that do not tally with what we think about ourselves. We carry labels given to us by the community and not the original ones.

EXTRA BIBLICAL MATERIAL

In Egyptian texts there is a reference to priestly prophets but this title refers to a servant of God. So these priestly prophets may not be prophets in the real sense of the word. Cananite text from Mesopotamia, in particular the Ugarit text, there is reference to prophet type figures who are diviners. In the bible for example 1 Kings 18:19 there is reference to Baal and Asherah, but their exact character is not known. An overall Canaanite source either refers to divination or they are so vague that no proper conclusion concerning the origins of prophecy can be drawn.

BIBLICAL SOURCES

Biblical sources are not homogenous in their presentation of prophecy. So it is still difficult to arrive at a smooth origin of the phenomenon, for example two books of Samuel the term prophet is used differently in different texts and often used interchangeably with the term seer. There are certain prophets who are referred to as prophets e.g. Nathan is always referred to as a prophet, and some who are referred to as both prophet and seer, for example Gad. According to 1 Samuel 9:9 the two terms do not mean one and the same thing. It appears the term prophet evolved from the term seer (Amos 7:14). However in 2 Samuel 24:11 Gad is referred as both seer and prophet. In the two books of Kings Elijah was regarded as a prophet but sometimes he is regarded as the 'man of God'. Elisha is also given the title man of God in 2 Kings 4:7,9,16,21,27, but the disciples who gather around him are referred to as the sons of the prophet, as if to suggest that the man of God and the prophet are one and the same thing. Amaziah referred to Amos as a seer but Amos rejects it and said he was not a prophet as if to suggest a prophet and seer are one and the same thing. With these fluctuations in meaning then who was a prophet, let alone how the name originated?

The origins of prophecy is controversial. Various views and theories have been brought forward of a sociological function, historical and philosophical nature. Such theories are equally porous.

Basically there are two broad theories on the origins of prophecy:

1. Prophecy as a borrowed phenomenon
2. Prophecy as unique feature of Israel.

PROPHECY AS A COMMON AND BORROWED PHENOMENON/ ASSOCIATIONIST THEORY

Scholars who subscribe to this view, for example J. Lindblom, use extra biblical material from the Ancient Near East to show that there are certain similarities which can be established between prophecy in Israel and Prophecy in the Ancient Near East.

According to J. Bright the patriarchs borrowed the culture of the Mesopotamians. If they could borrow the culture of the Mesopotamians what could stop them from borrowing their religion? In support of this view J. Pederson argues that the whole institution belong to Canaan and is closely related to Canaanite culture. There is some substance in this theory because of the similarities between Israelite and Ancient Near East prophecy.

Evidence in support of this:

1. The word prophet itself came from a foreign word nabi which is a Hebrew word and hence is not of Israelite origin.
2. The covenant arrayed by Yahweh and the people through the prophets are like the suzerain treaties of the Hitites.
3. Ecstasy which is regarded as one of the earliest form of prophecy in Israel; was not for them only, for example Baal prophets at the contest at Mount Carmel were ecstatic too. (Refer to the legend of Wen Amon)
4. Israelite prophets had clear court connections and some Ancientnear East prophets had connections with courts, for example Mantic and Mahhumm prophets of the god Dagan in the time of Hammurabi, although they seem not to have used the oracles as such.
5. Prophets as mouth- pieces of deities. In the Mari text there was a Syrian god Adad who used a prophet as his mouth- piece and the prophet claimed authority over the king.
6. Prophetic guilds.

THE LEGEND OF WEN AMON

According to this legend, there was a certain man by the name Wen Amon from Egypt who went to a certain centre in Phoenicia called Biblis looking for timber to build a temple for his god, AmonRe. On arrival Wen Amon forwarded his request to the prince but the prince ignored him because he was busy

offering sacrifices to his God. It was during this sacrificial ceremony when a youth got into trance or ecstasy. The youth in this state summoned the priest's mission, and without making any decision the prince granted Wen Amon's request.

According to this school there is a sense in which the possessed youth can be considered as a prophet. In other words the youth possessed three prophetic traits:

- iv. Ecstasy
- v. Ability to foretell (prediction)
- vi. Prophetic authority

So if we consider this youth as a prophet there is no way we can say this phenomenon is unique to Israel.

THE LEGEND OF ZIMRI LIM FROM MARI TEXT

Mari was a cultic centre and Zimri lim was a legendary king of Mesopotamia. The legend talks about a certain seer who went to Zimri lim with a message from god Adad and the message was 'I am the god who made you king over Mesopotamia if you obey me I will bless you, if you disobey I will punish you'. This seer is said to have released this message in ecstasy.

SIMILARITIES

- The title seer is also used to refer to Israelite prophet.
- Being ecstatic
- Prophetic oracle is similar to Israelite prophetic oracles and contents.

THE STELLE OF ZAKR

Zakr was a Syrian king. Stelle is an inscription on the rock. On the tablet there seems to be an oracle or statement which was released when the Syrians were about to be captured. The king released the following words, 'I lifted my hands to Baal Shamayn and he answered me and spoke to me by means of visionaries...'. Although it was not clear from the inscription on the rock, it appears these words are a prophecy in response to the king's prayer and the people who are referred as visionaries could be regarded as prophets.

WEAKNESSES

1. It ignores the theological origins of prophecy that is the link between prophecy and religion.
2. It ignores political factors behind the emergency of prophecy.

3. It assumes that we have clearly identified characteristics of prophecy which we can use to define the phenomenon, in particular ecstasy is taken to be a major prophetic feature, the problem is we do not have a clearly developed definition of prophecy and in particular ecstasy was not a major feature of prophecy in Israel. Rarely do we find Israelite prophets releasing their oracles in a state of ecstasy. If at all ecstasy was a major feature of prophecy then it was a feature of earliest prophets and tends to die out as we move to the classical period. Moreover according to J. Linblom ecstasy can not be borrowed as it is from a deity.
4. Prophecy in the Ancient Near East was divinatory in nature, while Israelite prophets were not allowed means of gaining information used by other nations, e.g. necromancy, sooth saying, e.t.c. Israelite prophets were commissioned by God. They only prophesy in the name of Yahweh and their objective was to ascertain the will of Yahweh regardless of personal wishes. Being independent of the hearers was the badge of a true prophet, for example the story of Micaiah when he was consulted by Ahab and Jehoshaphat.

These differences between prophecy in Ancient Near East and prophecy in Israel led some scholars to argue that prophecy in Israel must have been unique to Israel. Basically these scholars pick certain unique features of Israelite prophecy and use this to argue for their positions. However they do not agree on what is unique about Israelite prophecy. Hence this broad theory can be split into sub- theories.

TRADITIONAL THEORY

This theory argues that prophecy in Israel originated as a basic mechanism through which YAHWEH communicated the meaning and demands of his covenant with Israel. Scholars who subscribe to this theory submits that prophets were messengers of YAHWEH who were basically intermediaries or covenant mediators. This submission is in the line with the meanings of some of the terms that are used to refer to prophets. According to W.B.ANDERSON "the English word prophet is derived from the Greek word prophetes which can be translated to mean one who speaks for another party, especially for the deity." As observed above the Hebrew equivalent term "nabi" can be translated literally to mean the one who communicates the divine will, so the idea remains the same that prophet were messengers of god.

From critics like H.GRUNKEL, and C.WESTERMAN support this understanding. They analyzed the form of oracles and discovered that the oracles almost always began with what they called the "messenger style", thus says YAHWEH .The implication is that, the prophets understood themselves as messengers of the lord who

communicated the meaning and demands of gods covenant with Israel. This therefore means that prophecy was covenant specific, it could not be understood outside the context of YAHWEH covenant with Israel.

This theory suggests that prophecy originated with Moses, particularly with the Sinai Covenant. The critics of this theory does not recognize the existence of other covenants in the OLD Testament like Genesis 15, Abraham. Those who subscribe to this theory submit that it is with the Sinai Covenant that we begin to see God entering into a Covenant with Israel as a nation. Earlier than Moses, God had entered into covenants with individuals and not with Israel as a nation. In this context, scholars who argue for this theory maintain that the covenant was a unique feature of Israelite religion and it is in this light that prophecy in Israel could be regarded as unique.

An analysis of this theory can lead to the conclusion that prophecy in Israel had cultic origins; it originated within the religious institutions of Israel. The first scholar to suggest this view was H.E Wald and it was later developed by G Holscher who explicitly stated that, "prophets were inspired as cultic figures, who were responsible for explaining the meaning and demands of the covenant." However, S Mowinkel and A.R Johnston have most convincingly argued the theory of cultic prophets in the ancient Israel. According to them, "in early Israel, the difference between a priest and a prophet was not very great since both responded to inquiries, offered instruction, and performed sacramental functions. Secondly, prophets are frequently closely related to the priests and the temple, especially in Jerusalem for instance, Elijah, like the prophets of Baal, offers sacrifices, [1Kings 18:20-40]. In this context, Mowinkel observes that, "prophets associated with the sanctuary served under the supervision and jurisdiction of the priests or with a status at least as high as, if not actually higher than that of the priests. Furthermore, Mowingelpointed to the divine speeches and oracles in the Psalms as further as evidence of prophetic functions within the cult. According to him, "the oracles were spoken to worshippers during rituals of national or personal lament [Psalm 126; 60:8-10, 91:14-16] and the coronation of Davidic rulers and other royal occasions [Ps 2; 20; 21; 45; 89; 110; 132]"

Critique

The first problem with this sub-theory is that there were different types of covenants within Israel. The question, which arises, is that, which one of these covenants was associated with the origins of prophecy? This theory suggests that different prophets may have arisen in connection with different covenant traditions within Israel. For instance, prophets from the North probably originated in connection with and were probably influenced by the Ephramite traditions while prophets from the

south were probably influenced by Judean prophetic traditions.

The second problem has to do with the assumption that the concept of covenant was unique feature of Israelite religion. This assumption has no strong base because there are striking similarities between the mosaic covenant and similar Hittite treaties, like the suzerainty treaty. Furthermore, this theory is based upon some assumption, which may not be historical. For example, the historicity of the figure of Moses and the exodus itself is not archaeologically confirmed. Finally, it is not explicitly clear that when prophets prophesied they always communicated the meaning and demands of God's covenant with Israel.

Prophets were messengers of Yahweh. Prophetes or nabi. The oracles begin with a messenger style. "Thus says the Lord...." Prophecy was covenant with Israel.

Prophecy originated with Moses at Mount Sinai. However it is weak because there were other covenants before it. Gen. 9:12 Noah, Gen 15 Abraham. Moses' covenant is national thus he becomes the first prophet. Moses arose to explain the demands of covenant.

THEOLOGICAL THEORY

According to B.W Anderson, prophecy originated in Israel as a basic mechanism through which Yahweh communicated the meaning and his demands of the covenant with Israel. This is in line with the meaning of the two terms that were used to refer to prophecy. The Greek word prophetess can be translated to mean one who communicated the divine will. Israelite prophets regarded themselves messengers of Yahweh. H. Gunkel and C. Westermann looked at the phenomenon of prophecy from a form critical perspective and they analyse the form of prophetic utterances and discover that these began with the 'messenger style', 'Thus says the Lord..' implying that their message was not from themselves but from an external force. These oracles specifically dealt with the covenant relationship between Israel and Yahweh. So prophecy in Israel was covenant specific. Such a covenant relationship was a unique feature of Israelite religion. This supports that Moses is the first prophet. He is the representative of all prophets. (Deut 18:18).

PROBLEMS

- There are some situations and there are some prophets without necessarily talking about the covenant and similarly there are some circumstances where certain Israelite figures talked about the covenant without prophesying, for example Noah.
- Some scholars like M. Noth challenged the view that Moses was the first

prophet on the grounds that all the verses which support Moses as a prophet are anachronistic. In fact for M.Noth later editors made Moses into a prophet yet he was really a very good leader. However Von Rad observed that prophecy in Israel is associated with the cult, leadership or both. This observation remains valid and from then onwards we proceed in three directions, that prophecy has either cultic or political origins or both.

CULTIC ORIGINS

The priestly theory is in support of Samuel as the first prophet as is proven in 1Samuel3. It states that prophecy is just an advancement of priesthood. Partly in support of the above theory is the seership theory which states that prophecy originated from seership and this is also regarded as the evolutionary theory by M. Noth.

This theory is mainly based on 1 Samuel 9:9. The implication of this verse is that the office of a prophet evolved from that of a seer. There was a historical development from the office of a seer to that of a prophet. The assumption is that there should be a distinction between a prophet and a seer.

This theory is supported by semantics. A semantic analysis of the Hebrew terms which are used to refer to a seer are roeh and hozer meaning one who is gifted with the ability to foretell, whereas the Hebrew term for a prophet is nabi which refer to a person who can do both foretelling and forth telling. Seers were primarily divinatory in that their emphasis is in the future but prophets were concerned with the present. If at all they refer to the future there was specific reason to relate the future to the present.

WEAKNESSES

1. This theory is based on 1 Samuel 9:9 and the assumption is that Samuel was the last judge and the first prophet, yet Genesis 20:7 refer to Abraham as a prophet and Deut 18:18, Hosea 12:13 refer to Moses as the first and architect of prophecy. Therefore we cannot assume that prophecy began with Samuel.
2. This theory assumes that there is a clear distinction between a seer and a prophet, yet the two terms are used interchangeably, e.g. 2Samuel 24:11, Gad is regarded as both a seer and a prophet. Amos in Amos 7:14 when he was addressed as a seer he responded denying that he was a prophet nor a prophet's son, as if to suggest the two terms mean one and the same thing. However some scholars try to distinguish a prophet and a seer.

The difference is that:

- A seer was more or less associated with specific shrine while prophets were itinerant.

- A seer was more or less a priest in that he dealt with issues of the cult, especially those elements that involve sacrifices.
- A seer receives remuneration for a service, while a prophet receive gifts.
- More often than not prophets clashed with kings and its rare to find seers clashing with kings.

POLITICAL OR SOCIOLOGICAL THEORY

It is based on sociological school of Mark Weber and Norman Gottwald. They believe that prophecy has its origins in sociological tension, as a result of commercialization which led to the creation of a social pyramid in Israel. When Israel settled in Canaan there developed three social groups, the aristocracy, the merchant and the commons (poor). The commons were being exploited by the elite and as a result there was class struggle in Israel. From this class struggle emerged some charismatic figures especially among the exploited class. Such figures were prophets who became the champions of the poor. They were the spokespersons of the deprived, the voice of the voiceless and were supported by Yahweh. This theory is supported by the incident of Naboth and Ahab in 1 Kings 21. Amos also defended the poor. Such a theory is important as it considered elements of economic and social factors which influence the rise of prophecy.

The process of the Exodus and the settlement in Canaan can be explained in terms of a political movement. In the light of this one can explain the origin of prophecy in terms of the clash between two ideologies, Yahwism as the ideology of the Hapiru and Baalism as the ideology of the ruling Canaanite class. The prophets would be considered as the political commissars of the time who helped to coin, shape and reshape the ideology of Yahwism and articulate it to the people boosting morale and motivation to the Hapirus during the liberation movement. The prophets acted as the custodians of the ideals of the liberation movement.

One can also look at the link between the origins prophecy and politics in Israel in terms of transition from a tribal confederacy to a monarchy and from priesthood to prophecy. The priests were part of the state as the office was sponsored by the state. With the establishment of the monarchy, kings probably abused their political power and perhaps got away with it because of the office of a priest would not criticize the king (the hand that was feeding them) as he was in charge of the state treasury. There was thus need to evolve an independent office that would speak for the poor and provide checks and balances on the office of the king. Prophets arose to fulfil this task

Weaknesses

This theory assumed that there was no prophecy before settlement in Canaan yet we have Abraham and Moses who are regarded as prophets.

PROPHECY HAS BOTH CULTIC AND POLITICAL ORIGINS

According to F.M Cross prophecy started with kingship and died together in exile. This is also supported by M. Noth's evolutionary theory which argued that prophecy evolved from seership. Prophecy originated as a class struggle or conflict of institutions that is cultic versus political institution. When the monarchy emerged there was proliferation of prophetic guilds who were situated near the Philistine garrison to champion holy wars. In this regard prophecy emerged as a religio-political stance to inspire nationalism and revolutionism in Israelites as they were faced with a war torn political event. Such political crisis needed religious interpreters to give the divine will and inspire holy wars. According to Harrelson the emergence of prophecy could be associated with institutional conflict. He argued that Israel was a covenant community with covenant representatives who mediated the divine will, for example Moses and Joshua. The rise of the monarchy seems to have given the kings the role of the covenant mediators and yet the community wanted the presence of the freedom of Yahweh to declare his will. As a result certain figures arose in a bid to check kingship usurpation of this religious duty. This explains why Samuel charged Saul in 1 Samuel 13:13-14. The king was not the official spokesperson of the deity. Nathan refused David permission to build the temple and promised him a dynastic rule that was to last forever (2 Samuel 7:1ff). so prophecy emerged as a conflict between two ideologies, that of divine leadership represented by charismatic office of the judges and that of prophetic office. The fact that prophecy thrived during the monarchy and later died with it showed interdependence of the two.

WEAKNESSES

The divine nature of prophecy was not well manifested. 1 Samuel 9:9 is ambiguous, word seer and prophet are used interchangeably.

CONCLUSION

Condensed the whole information showed that to explain how prophecy originated in Israel is synonymous to seeking a needle in a hay stack. Biblical and extra biblical information is inadequate to solve this problem. Hence the origins of prophecy in Israel remains veiled in obscurity. It leaves us on cross roads. what is clear is that prophecy has to do with God and is generally linked to social, political, religious and

cultural crisis of the time. Hence J. Muilenburg concluded that prophecy came with a particular word for a particular time.

REASONS FOR EMERGENCE OF PROPHECY

- Need for intercession (Gen 20:7)
- Need to interpret the misfortunes of Israel and explain the covenant and the exodus event (Moses)
- Need for ecstasies, that is charismatic defense and administration (Numbers 11:25).
- Need to deal with Philistine aggression. Need to revive Israel's religion that is, to combat idolatry. Need to institute and control the monarchy (Samuel).

SIMILARITIES BETWEEN PROPHECY IN ANCIENT NEAR EAST AND THAT OF ZIMBABWE

- the legend of Wen Amon and the issue of ecstasy. Zimbabwean prophets are also ecstatic forthtellers and have prophetic authority.
- Both are caught with the spirit of nationalism.
- From the legend of Zimri lim a seer used the prophetic formula 'Thus says the lord' which is also used by some Zimbabwean prophets for example some say 'Zvanzi nashi Jehovha...'
- From the stele of Zakr the issue of visions come out. Some Zimbabwean prophets claim to see visions.
- The concept of a seer can also be equated to the concept of (varatidzwa) in some African independent churches.
- Prophets in both Zimbabwe and the ANE is given by individuals wearing distinct regalia (uniforms).

CALL OF ANCIENT NEAR EAST PROPHETS

A call narrative is the section of a prophetic book that records the call of a prophet. A call was the mark of a true prophet in Israel and this is probably what distinguished Israelite prophets from other prophet-type persons in the rest of the Ancient Near East.

A call narrative almost always assumed a definite form or proceeded in definite stages, namely:

1. Theophany- the deity either appears or he is heard and lets his mission known.
2. Resistance from the prophet
3. Pressure from the deity. This pressure takes two forms, namely force and persuasion with signs.
4. Acceptance by a prophet
5. Commissioning of the prophet and assurance from the deity.

The call of Ancient Israelite prophets was a call to mediate the covenant between Israel and Yahweh and therefore a prophet as a covenant mediator speaks to the whole people of Israel and not specific individuals only.

See Bishau pages 45-47

SIMILARITIES WITHG PROPHETS IN ZIMBABWE

1. Prophets in Zimbabwe also claim to have experienced theophanies. Clear example is Johane Masowe, Johane Marange and Mwazha. Dreams or visions feature in most accounts of the call
2. It seems most of them did not respond to their calls out of their own will. In a way they resisted the call.

DIFFERENCES

1. THE FORM OF PRESSURE EXERTED ON PROPHETS IN Zimbabwe is slightly different from that of Ancient Israelite prophets. Most accounts of prophetic calls in Zimbabwe show that prophets in Zimbabwe began with strange illness they could not iunterpret. Johane Masowe for example fell ill and was transported into the heavenly realm. This is then interpreted as the call.
2. Commissioning is a call to address specific individuals especially in matters of their illness. The call is almost a call to a healing ministry. Therefore it is not immediately clear whether or not these prophets are covenant mediators.
3. Most call accounts of prophets in Zimbabwe, especially those from African Independent churches resemble those of traditional healers more than those of Ancient Israelite prophets

The “Man of God”

Understanding Biblical Influence on Contemporary Mega-Church Prophets in Zimbabwe

Abstract

Different names are used to refer to various religious functionaries across the World Religions. In Zimbabwean Christianity, there is a group of Christian officials who are currently popularly known as “men of God.” This article argues that this title is one of the many influences of the Bible on contemporary Christianity, since its use is dependent on its biblical usage, especially regarding the extra-ordinary and miraculous events surrounding Elijah and Elisha. The title is used eighty times in the Christian Bible and seventy-nine of these are in the Old Testament. In our analysis of both its Old Testament and contemporary usage, the title is used to acknowledge the qualitative difference between all human beings and the few men (and women) who are specially chosen to be God’s representatives. These specially chosen functionaries are more than simply human, and do more than simple human beings do. “Man of God” is understood as a continuation of biblical traditions.

Introduction

The advent of prophets in Zimbabwean Christianity can be traced back to the early decades of the twentieth century, during the period that African Initiated Churches were founded and planted across Zimbabwe. The most prominent among these prophets were Samuel Mutendi of the Zion Christian Church, Johanne Marange of the African Apostolic Church as well as Johanne Masowe of the Apostolic Sabbath

Church of God (Daneel 1971:339, Mukonyora 1998:191-207, Gunda 2012:335-36). Since then, every generation of African Christians, with special reference to Zimbabwean Christians, has seen its own prophets. Some of these prophets have continued in the heritage of these pioneering prophets of AICs while others have added on to the heritage, especially when one focuses on Zimbabwean Pentecostal prophets. This latter brand of prophets in Zimbabwe was locally popularized by Ezekiel Guti, founder and leader of the Zimbabwe Assemblies of God Africa, Forward in Faith (ZAOGA FIF). However, the current discussions surrounding prophets and prophecy in Zimbabwe are largely inspired by another brand of Pentecostal prophets, the mega-church prophets. Among this class are Emmanuel Makandiwa and Uebert Angel, founders of the United Family International Church and the Spirit Embassy respectively. There is so much that has captured the imagination of Zimbabweans when one looks at these two leading figures among the mega-church prophets currently operating in Zimbabwe: from their lavish and materially extravagant lifestyles, including the latest and very expensive cars such as a Lamborghini and Bentley for Angels and a Mercedes S600 for Makandiwa. These prophets also claim to possess spiritual healing powers that few can rival, and to being able to bless followers materially, including the so-called "miracle money" where followers find money in their pockets and bank accounts (Daily news, 06 February 2013;

Newsday, 16 January 2013;

Newsday, 08 January 2013; <http://nehandaradio.com/category/news/page/5/>;

The Herald, 05 January 2013;

Newsday, 30 January 2013;

The Standard, 06 January 2013) that cannot be accounted for through normal accounting procedures. Makandiwa has also come up with his "miracle weight loss" where the prophet commands fat to burn and people instantly lose weight (The Sunday Mail, 13 February 2013). Makandiwa has also been associated with miracle babies where it is reported that the United Family International Church leader assisted a couple to conceive and give birth after three days (The Herald, 21 February 2013). Miracle money remains unexplained! There are claims, however, of people finding money in their pockets, which they did not have previously. Such claims are also made regarding bank account balances, where accounts are believed to be credited with money that cannot be accounted for through normal accounting procedures. In a meeting with the Governor of the Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe, Makandiwa and Angel appeared to suggest that all they do is recover lost money and return it to its rightful owners, which seems to contradict the initial claims surrounding miracle money. 2 Miracle weight loss is among the claims being made by the mega-church superstar prophets. People who have allegedly battled weight problems are prayed for and their excess fats are commanded by word of mouth to burn instantly. Interestingly, in one of the videos, it appears that only women lose weight and only

from their waist down-wards since only skirts were visibly oversized while their tops remained of the right size.

All these are interesting facets of this new brand of prophets in Zimbabwe; however, this study focuses on another aspect which has a bearing on all the claims we have just highlighted above. These prophets are among the few religious functionaries in Zimbabwe who use the title “man of God” extensively and exclusively either through self-propagating or by accepting the title when it is used by their followers. This study therefore traces the biblical roots of the phrase “man of God” and investigates how the biblical texts on “man of God” have influenced the self-understanding and claims being made by Zimbabwean prophets.

“Man of God” in the Bible: statistical analysis

The phrase “man of God” occurs eighty times in the Christian Bible. Of the eighty times that this phrase is used, only once is it used in the New Testament, precisely in 1 Tim. 6:11. The New Testament text (1 Tim. 6:11) seems not to have found favour with the Zimbabwean ‘men of God’ due to the insinuations of the text especially the preceding verses. The text, especially 1 Timothy 6:9-10, outlines what the “man of God” should guard against by saying

But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and hurtful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction.

For the love of money is the root of all evils; it is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced their hearts with many pangs.

But as for you, man of God, shun all this; aim at righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness, gentleness (1 Tim. 6:9-10 RSV).

As the only text in the New Testament that talks about the “man of God”; the text, unfortunately, is in bad taste for many “men of God” whose messages predominantly focus on the prosperity gospel (Machingura, 2011:212). It is our contention therefore that the use of the title ‘man of God’ for contemporary religious functionaries in Zimbabwe is not overly dependent on this New Testament understanding, especially since those using it seem to also be the gospel of prosperity preachers. While the phrase “man of God” is only used once in the New Testament, it is predominantly used in the Old Testament. Interestingly, it is the Old Testament portrayal of the “man of God” that appears to be the basis upon which some individuals in Zimbabwe claim to be “men of God”. The distribution of the phrase “man of God” is interesting to observe. Following the canonical arrangement of the books, the phrase appears for the first time in Deut. 33:1 with reference to Moses. Interestingly, this is the only time that this phrase is used in the Pentateuch, a section of the Old Testament that is largely concerned with the law of the Lord. It then appears again once in Joshua (14:6) and twice in Judges (13:6, 8). In Joshua the reference is once again to Moses

while in Judges it is used with reference to the angel of God who announced the birth of Samson. In short, the phrase “man of God” is used four times in the first seven books of the Old Testament. There are five references to “man of God” in 1 Samuel (2:27; 9:6, 7, 8, 10) and it occurs seven times in 1 and 2 Chronicles (1 Chr.23:14, 2 Chr.8:14; 11:2; 25:7, 9; 30:16). In these texts, it is used to refer to Moses, David and some prophets. It also occurs once in Ezra (3:2) and twice in Nehemiah (12:24, 36) where it is used with reference to Moses and David respectively. There is also reference to Moses the “man of God” in Psalm 90:1 as well as Igdaliah the “man of God” in Jeremiah 35:4. These uses amount to twenty-one uses out of the seventy-nine occurrences in the Old Testament, the remaining occurrences are limited to the books of Kings where the phrase occurs fifty-eight times. In these fifty-eight occurrences, there is reference to Shemaiah, a prophet (1Kgs. 12:22), while the phrase occurs frequently in 1 Kgs.13 (vss. 1, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 11, 12, 14, 19, 21, 23, 26, 29, 31) as well as in 2 Kgs. 23: 16 and 17 where it is used to designate the unnamed man of God who came from Judah. This unnamed “man of God” is credited with making prophecies against Bethel and foretelling the coming of King Josiah century’s later (Crenshaw 1971:41-2, Cogan and Tadmor 1988:299-300). There is also reference to another unnamed man of God in 1 Kgs. 20:28. The title “Man of God” appears in several texts (1Kgs.17:18, 24; 2Kgs.1:9, 10, 11, 12, 13) as a designation of Elijah and as a designation of Elisha in 2 Kgs. 4: 7, 9, 16, 21, 22, 25, 27, 40, 42; 5: 8, 14, 15, 20; 6: 6, 9, 10, 15; 7: 2, 17, 18, 19; 8: 2, 4, 7, 8, 11; 13: 19. While the “man of God” who came from Judah is only identified through this phrase, however, the manner in which this phrase is used for Elijah and Elisha coupled with the popularity of these figures in Christian communities means our investigation of the influence of the biblical “man of God” on contemporary men of God should largely focus on these two individuals. Of the fifty-eight times that the phrase occurs in Kings, on thirty-four occasions it is with reference to either Elijah or Elisha, and it is often qualified by extraordinary demonstrations of miraculous power.

“Man of God” in the Bible: Characterizations

The title “man of God” is one among many titles that are applied to a select group of individuals alongside and as interchangeable to “prophet”, “seer” and “prophetess”, especially in the story of the lost donkeys of Saul where Samuel (1 Sam. 9:6-10) is described as prophet, seer and man of God (Lamb 2010:176). From this background it is apparent that the title “man of God” is not a general designation for all created beings but rather an exclusive title for the few “men (possibly women also)” who stand in a very intimate and close relationship with God. Indeed, “the man of God is a specially set aside individual who is essentially a manifestation of the divine hence protected by the divine and in instances where such divinity is not respected, the divine reserves the right to avenge” (Gunda 2012:345). This makes sense when one considers that in the entire Pentateuch; only Moses is labelled man of God. A closer analysis of Deut. 33:1 shows that “the superscription uses the phrase ‘the man of God’ to refer to Moses as does Joshua 14:6 and Ps. 90. The same title is frequently

used of “prophets or messengers of God” (Driver 1973:389). Texts that refer to Moses as “man of God” clearly show that there is some qualitative difference between Moses and all other Israelites. Moses is different, he relates differently with God and he accesses God differently from all other created beings. It is this difference between Moses and ordinary men and women that mark him out as man of God. “Man of God” is an outstanding individual, an “Übermensch ” (Glover 2006:452) suggesting an individual who is literally “above men”. This is a title that places some mortals above other mortals, especially because of the things that they can accomplish. Chapter 33 of Deuteronomy is labelled the Blessing of Moses and it consists of a series of benedictions pronounced upon the different tribes of Israel (even though Simeon is not recognized) (Driver 1973:385). Moses stands as the founding father blessing his descendants, and this comes after he had received the law from Yahweh and had passed on the same to the Israelites. The law that is interchangeably called the Law of the Lord or the Law of Moses is central in understanding why Moses is qualified as “man of God”. No other individual had been this close to God! Being “above men”, “Moses thereby gives to each tribe his own gift of divine understanding and power, and at the same time the diverse gifts and characteristics of each tribe are recognized and affirmed to be gifts of God” (Clements 1998:534). This is similarly important that the blessings given by Moses are as good as blessings given by God because the man of God stands for God, his actions are God’s actions. This understanding of “man of God” is equally attested in the Elijah and Elisha narratives. The outstanding nature of Elijah is suggested in insinuations that “supports the suspicion that where Elijah, life or speech are, YHWH is never far away” (Glover 2006:450). Yahweh, the God of Israel, is always hovering around the “man of God”, suggesting that proximity to the “man of God” is essentially proximity to Yahweh. This creates the impression that Elijah “will stride the earth like some Yahwistic übermensch, unperturbed by the droughts and distances of earth. He is the prophet who ‘stands before the Lord.’ The words of Elijah and YHWH share a common authority and ability to shape the future” (Glover 2006:452, 453). The things that constrain men and women cannot constrain the man of God who is essentially standing under the shadow of God, sharing in the authority of God, which gives him the power to command the “jar of meal not to be emptied and the jug of oil not to fail until the day that the lord sends rain on the earth (1 Kgs. 17:14-24)” (Gunda 2012:346). The “man of God” represents life because God is life. As Glover observes, there is much symbiosis between Yahweh and “man of God” that it is difficult if not impossible to separate their effects on the community. “If the speech of Elijah and YHWH has a similar effect, so also does their presence. The story begins with an apparent association between YHWH and certain substances of nourishment—above all water. Their abundance (e.g. in the widow’s house, 17.14-16) points to the presence of God. Their scarcity (e.g. the drought, 17.1-7) is suggestive of divine absence” (Glover 2006:453 cf. Gunda 2011:146). This is particularly important in searching for the effects of these narratives on contemporary manifestations, the “man of God” represents abundance wherever the “man of God”

is present and the same applies to God. In short, the title “man of God” is used to describe some outstanding individuals who are believed to have a special relationship with God. It is mostly used to refer to individuals who are sometimes called “prophets”, “seers”, and “visionaries.” The title is used interchangeably with these other titles, especially in 1 Samuel 9. In the narrative of 1 Kings 13 as well as the Elijah-Elisha narratives, the title appears to be simply an equivalent of prophet. The man of God is associated with extraordinary demonstration of miraculous power, which is seen as the result of being a direct representative of God (Gunda 2012:340). Being in the presence of the “man of God” is understood as being in the presence of God since the “man of God” possesses and uses the power of God.

The Influence of the “Man of God” Texts on Contemporary Prophets

While the authenticity and veracity of the Bible is roundly questioned in academic circles, African manifestations of Christianity (barring a few exceptions that disregard the Bible as being “stale food” such as the Johane Masowe groups (Engelke 2004)) has been thoroughly and extensively “biblical.” Most African Christians take their Bible seriously as the be-all in terms of deciding what they should do as Christians, if not in their actual daily lives then at least in public discussions. Biblical examples and injunctions are therefore actively sought to justify and rationalize what to do, how to do it, when to do it and why to do it. In such contexts, it should not be surprising therefore that contemporary claimants to the title “man of God” present themselves as descendants of the line of the specially chosen few who stood before God and who shared in God’s authority. In one incident Makandiwa was quoted in the print media confirming his election in one of his sermons when he said that (The Herald, 03 January 2013): The Lord told me “Tell Zimbabweans to change their focus. Everyone is saying diamonds, diamonds, but I see another precious mineral for Zimbabwe ... gold will be picked up from the ground. Mysteriously gold will be appearing everywhere. As I was praying I saw a wind blowing and I saw gold coming to the surface. People are going to be picking up gold without any drilling. You know what they say about the water table? One has to dig first before accessing water, but with this one there is no drill-ing needed. Those people who have been looked down upon will be picking up gold like they are picking up stones. The Lord told me ‘This is for my people’,” said the UFIC spiritual father to wild applause.

The sermon on the night was premised on 2 Kings 7 where the lives of the Israelites were transformed from poverty to plenty in one day following the declaration of Elisha, the “man of God”. Makandiwa’s statement confirms what most of the Pentecostal Christians’ understanding of the Bible and the pastors involved in ministry as ‘mouthpieces and God’s representatives’. The contemporary claimants reject the idea of “the end of inspiration” as contradicting the dictates of the Bible, the Word of God. In the Bible, it is clear that “after his dramatic victory over the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel, Elijah is portrayed as spiraling into a suicidal

depression, in the midst of which Yahweh informs him that he has chosen his successor” (Lamb 2010:172). In short, the understanding is that God intended to always have a representative or representatives among human beings, hence the choice of a successor for Elijah is not only specific, it is also representative. In reaching this observation we are indebted to earlier observations by Robert Carroll (1969:401) when he states: “The institution of prophecy was to be a continuous and permanent office constantly supplying the people of Israel with a covenant mediator who would recreate the role of Moses for the nation.” This understanding is critical in trying to understand the contemporary manifestations of Christian prophets both among AICs as well as among the Pentecostal movements. As noted earlier, the biblical “man of God” is essentially more than simply a human being, he or she is divine-human being because he embodies an amalgamation of his mortal nature and the immortal nature of God, sharing in the fate of humanity yet exercising the power and authority of God. The performance of miracles and other such para-normal activities is understood in the context of their divinity. All things that God can do can be done by the “man of God” hence the idea that where the man of God is, God cannot be far away (Glover 2006:450). It is not surprising that, such ‘men of God’ attract big crowds as in the case of Makandiwa whose followers stampede in order to have access to the front seats in the auditorium where they will be closer to the ‘man of God’ (<http://www.intozimbabwe.com/top-news/zimbabwe/3016-18-injured-in-stampede-to-see-prophet-makandiwa.html>). In another incident, the Spirit Embassy Ministries Church founder, Uebert Angel had to abandon his food from a fast food outlet in Gweru and flee from members of the public, who had thronged the premises and started jostling to greet the “man of God” (The Chronicle, 24 October 2012). The popular preacher Uebert Angel and his body guards had to dash into their vehicles and flee, leaving their food which was still being prepared after members of the public swarmed the food outlet and started jostling to greet the Harare-based preacher-cum prophet. Those who managed to evade the human wall made by Prophet Angel’s bodyguards would kneel on the tarmac before greeting him. One of the few who had the chance to shake hands with Prophet Angel claimed that they were “blessed” as a result of shaking hands with the “man of God” (The Chronicle, 24 October 2012). The man who appeared to have entered into a trance soon after shaking hands with Prophet Angel said “Thank God, I am now a new man. I am blessed to have been greeted by this great man of God”. The people who flock around the “man of God” or who seek the presence of the “man of God” are in essence seeking the presence of God. In the case of Zimbabwe, prominent musicians like Leonard Karikoga Zhakata, gospel diva Joyce Simeti, Mahendere Brothers, Peter Moyo, Sulumani Chimbetu, Diva Mafunga and Biggie Tembo (Jnr) among many others have deserted their old churches to join thousands of people attending Makandiwa’s church (newsdezimbabwe.com). Followers of the popular “men of God” have gone to the extent of putting stickers that identify them with their “men of God” on their cars, office chairs (where they usually sit) and their Bibles. It is now common in Harare to see private cars owned by for most of Makandiwa’s

followers with stickers with the UFIC logo with words like “Ndiri mwana wemuporofita

– I am a child of the prophet”. It is also interesting that, followers of the “man of God” as in the case of wamuprofita Makandiwa and Angel are very conservative, defensive and sometimes resort to abusive or threatening language whenever their “men of God” are criticized. Christine Vuta, who christened herself ‘mwana or child of the prophet’ did not take lightly to people who criticized Makandiwa and Angel on the ‘miracle baby of three days and miracle money episodes’ by saying: I write as an ordinary member of United Family International Church (UFIC). I challenge the critics of my spiritual fathers to pray that they be granted the spirit of discernment so that they know the spirit behind these men of God. If you are [a] genuine Christian; then you will see that these servants of God are led by the spirit of truth. They are vessels (men of God) that the Lord has chosen to bring about spiritual revival in Zimbabwe. I have heard careless statements like ‘Makandiwa is neither God nor Jesus’. True but he has heeded the call by Jesus which he told his disciples in John 14:12. Why should people have problems when greater miracles are performed, for instance, instant weight loss and gold appearing in peoples’ hands? (The Sunday Mail, 24 February-2 March 2013).

Vuta, just like many followers of these Pentecostal mega-churches, regards what the “men of God” miraculously do as fulfillment of the ‘word of God’. Takura Mukwati (The Herald, 10 July 2012; The Herald, 26 February 2013), a pastor in the UFIC, was quoted in The Herald threatening those who criticized Makandiwa by saying: Born of a prophet, in this article, I am going to answer a bit of this question. A prophet is a man of insight to the will and purposes of God (Amos 3 v 7). A prophet is a man who sits in the cabinet with the Al-mighty and can hear the discussions of heaven and can bring them to men. Our father in the Lord Prophet Emmanuel Makandiwa, in United Family International Church, is a typical example of a prophet of that calibre whom the Lord has given to us as a gift. He is amongst the Prophets who are the eyes and minds of God, members of the heavenly cabinet. That is why there is always a violent reaction from the heavens when his prophets (Makandiwa included) are touched, embarrassed, harassed, persecuted or killed. Touching a prophet is a shortcut to the grave according to Psalms 105: 14-15, graves of sicknesses, poverty, misfortunes, even spiritual and physical death.

If in times past, Elijah’s deeds were a confirmation of the spoken word of God; contemporary “men of God” see themselves or are seen by their followers as being legitimized through the written word of God while at the same time they authenticate the word of God. Josephine Chuma (Daily news, 07 August 2012) adds her voice by claiming that: Prophet Emmanuel Makandiwa is a real man of God. He does not claim to have powers but he has got the power of God. He has been anointed by God to deliver people who believe in God from the evil works of the devil. Those who believe have been made to prosper in all aspects of their lives including health,

finances, education only to name a few. The anointing upon Prophet Makandiwa involves a multiplicity of blessings which includes wisdom, favour, honour and protection from evil forces and misfortunes.

And in most cases the authentication of their inextricable connection to the divine is through the performance of miracles as witnessed at Makandiwa and Angel's Church services (Daily news, 26 June 2011; Newsday, 10 August 2012). According to Pastor Ndhlovu of the Apostolic Faith Mission in Zimbabwe (interviewed, 19 February 2013), the danger that we have today is that of people who think we can relive the world of the Old Testament "men of God". For him, the calibre of prophets we have are 'fake, hucksters and empire builders' who hide behind the Bible to milk unsuspecting people. Antonia Sigauke (interviewed, 18 February 2013) posed the following questions in response to threats that are usually churned out by followers of the Zimbabwean "men of God": Why should prophets not be questioned? When they become prophets, do they cease to be human beings and become infallible? This is setting a dangerous precedent of not subjecting the prophets to the test of scripture and soundness according to the word of God. Why should the prophets be afraid of being questioned? Why is it some of them get arrested for committing heinous crimes like: rape, theft and murder?

Critics of the contemporary "men of God" find it very difficult to reconcile the influence of the "man of God" texts on the contemporary Zimbabwean prophets, especially when it comes to their flashy lifestyles in the context of the poverty of their followers. Yet followers of such "men of God" see it differently. Not only does the man of God read the text of the Bible, he acts it out in his own words and the followers become the recipients of the benefits of the presence of the divine, which is characterized by the abundance of health, wealth and well-being (Glover 2006:453). The followers and those in the presence of the man of God; "witness to the inexhaustible jar of meal and jug of oil in their own lives" (1 Kgs.17) (Gunda 2012:346). This text is re-enacted week in, week out until the followers start proclaiming to themselves, to the man of God and to others who stand outside: 'Now I know that you are a man of God and that the word of the Lord in your mouth is truth'(1 Kgs.17:24). Such texts are read to show what God did through a chosen vessel, in a way that convinces the followers and listeners of the authenticity of what the contemporary prophet is going to do in the name of God. Elijah and the contemporary prophet are similar, they are specially chosen by God and they need each other. The Biblical narrative legitimizes the current prophet but the current prophet makes an unbelievable Biblical narrative believable by re-enacting it" (Gunda 2012:346). The motto for the con-temporary man of God is simple, the unbelievable is godly! (Gunda 2011:147). The same motto has become the slogan for the majority of followers in these mega churches where the 'men of God' are regarded as 'friends of God' who know the mind of God.

Concluding Observations

Among the many titles that are being appropriated by contemporary prophets in Zimbabwe is the title "man of God". While it has always been used by Christians, it appears that its use was given a new lease of life by Pentecostal religious functionaries. Within Zimbabwe, the role of Guti in popularizing this title cannot be overstated. However, the rise of a class of mega-church superstar prophets at the end of the first decade of the twenty-first century in Zimbabwe made this title even more popular. Ordinary Christians excite their prophet into prophesying by consistently urging him on using the title "man of God." It is a title that acknowledges that some men and women are in a better position to commune with God than others. These privileged individuals can become bridges that help others cross flooded rivers between their sinful lives and the holy lives demanded by God

PROPHECY: DEFINITION

Prophet; the word occur in popular speech to designate a person who predict the future. However Hebrew prophets were not primarily of this type. Prophecy as a phenomenon cannot have a clearly identifiable definition, but we also have logical inconsistency not to define. so we need a working definition.

Prophecy if it is to be understood have to be defined in terms of characteristics because the bible our major source offers no definition of what a prophet is.

The biblical word nabi have any definite meaning in Hebrew that we can discern. The word prophet is derived from the Greek translation of Nabi where the translators have opted to speak in the name of God or an interpreter of the will of God rather than 'mantis' (a diviner, seer, sooth sayer). So the word prophet is an interpreted one and distanced from the Hebrew text. Though difficult to define the best way we can come up with a definition of a prophet is through its characteristics as described in the bible in Deut 18:9-22. After condemning the non-Israelite practices of sorcery, divination, necromancy e.t.c. the writer continues 'I will raise a prophet like you from among their brethren and I will put my words in his mouth and he shall speak to them all that I command him' (Deut 18:18). It is in light of this that form critics like Westermann and Gunkel argue that the oracles of the prophets began with the messenger;s style 'thus says the Lord...' implying that the message was not from themselves but from the one who sent them. So prophets were messengers or intermediaries. According to J. Muilenburg a prophet is described as a mouth piece of Yahweh.

Prophecy therefore is an institution through which God can speak the truth about some historical situation is verbalized. According to H.H Guthrie, a prophet therefore is a vehicle through which the truth about some specific situation is verbalized. It is becoming the means whereby God defines the meaning of history. For H.H Rowley the prophet who is properly so called was a man who knew God in the immediacy of experience who felt inescapable of God and whose word was at bottom a revelation

of the issue of that life who therefore declared the issue and pleaded with man to avoid it by cleansing and renewing their lives. They served as models of spiritual heights which all people might someday reach. In this way prophets functioned as individuals who had been divinely chosen to reform all aspects of human society. Prophet's task was not only to preach, he was also appointed to be assayer and tester. (Jer 6:7). He had to examine his people distinguishing between that which was good and that which was evil.. According to J. Lindblom it was on the result of this examination that the content of a prophet's message depended. In actual fact prophets are seen as people appointed by Yahweh to monitor his people's progress or decline in obedience to Yahweh's will and to strive to keep the nation on the course originally intended by him for its good. The Israelites had been united by culture, religion being one of the components. They knew that religion stemming from the covenant relationship with god was the nation's strength and the reason for its existence.

According to Marara, the concept of prophecy in Zimbabwe is usually associated with the notion of one person that is, a prophet telling another his or her issues. There is an element of prediction which is involved. The common trend in Zimbabwe is that people talk in terms of 'kuprofitwa' (being prophesied) or in the context of white garment churches 'kushandirwa'. Prophecy in Zimbabwe is associated with independent African churches commonly called 'Vapositori'. Some prominent names in this category are Johane Masowe, Johane Marange, and Ernest Paul Mwazha.

Zimbabwe has also witnessed the rise of many prophets in the Pentecostal domain. Some of these are Makandiwa (United Family International Ministries), Prophet Uerbert Angel (Spirit Embassy Ministries), prophet Andrew Wutaunashe (Family of God), and prophet Passion Java (Kingdom embassy Ministries). Some of the prophets have actually been credited with the ability to reveal personal details of people including the address, phone numbers, dates of birth to mention but a few.

PREDICTION (FORETELLING) AND PROCLAMATION (FORTH TELLING)

Proclamation is addressing of the prevailing situation and prediction is foretelling. In addressing the prevailing situation prophets often alluded to events yet to come. Prophecy was first and foremost a matter of conveying the message of God to the immediate listeners not a matter of predicting the future. It becomes obvious that the words of the prophet were concerned with repentance or absence of it. However in dealing with the present prophets often alluded to the events to come. This actually shows that prediction and proclamation were interwoven but emphasis was on proclamation.

According to J. Muilenburg, prophets came with a particular word for a particular time. This shows that they were not mere prognosticators whose aim was to show or demonstrate that God knows the future. If at all prophets told the future, it had a bearing on the present. They were there to interpret certain events and advise people

on what action to take. B.W.Anderson argues that prophecy in Israel is associated with a particular tradition and experience. Israel originated with the exodus experience and the covenant. Moses declared the will of God to Pharaoh that is to free Israelites. Prophets were there to advise Israelites to put away foreign gods and worship Yahweh only. However other scholars question Moses as a prophet. G.Von Rad's observation is more plausible. He argues that prophecy in Israel is associated with either a cult, leadership or both. Prophets were calling people to practical holiness and repentance and were advising people to put their trust in Yahweh, e.g. Isaiah argues that behind the scenes there is Yahweh, the sovereign ruler. The secrets of the Lord revealed to his prophets his not primarily knowledge of the future events but God's governance of the world whereby sins are judged and repentance is accepted. So Israelite prophets made predictions on the conviction that Yahweh was shaping the course of events, leading from the present into the future, e.g. Amos predicted doom because of people's disobedience. According to Von Rad, prophecy in this case did not announce what would happen but what according to God's justice was inevitable,e.g. because of its sins Jerusalem had to perish (Jer 7:13-20). This is not prediction either in the sense of soothsaying or as a result of some technical skills. This is the proclamation of the acts of holy and righteous God who does not leave sins unpunished and yet shows mercy to all who love him to keep his commandments (Exodus 20:5-6). Prophets preached future disasters as well as salvation e.g. Amos 5:18-24, because what they predicted was not a matter of change but rested at God's governance. The prophets could proclaim with matter of certainty, disaster as well as salvation. Isaiah for instance gave his children names that epitomized his message, Spoil speed prey hastens, remnant shall return. Thus he showed that he had no doubt about what would happen or that disaster will come at the appointed times. It is precisely this alliance of proclamation and prediction that is the hall- mark of a true prophet. Previously prophecy was specifically prediction but with the classical prophets the view has become prevalent that the true function of a prophet was to become a teacher of ethical and religious truth. However they never seized to be seers, their face is always turned to the future. They stand in the council of Yahweh and it is what he is about to do that they declare to men. Their conviction is that the destruction of the nation is inevitable and they dwell on the nature of Yahweh and on the moral decision of people to impress their conviction on the nation (Amos 4:12).

ROLES OF PROPHETS

MESSENGERS OF YAHWEH

The authority enjoyed by prophets among their people depended naturally on the fact that they were bearers of the divine word. They were commissioned by God and understood themselves as messengers of Yahweh hence they used the prophetic formula 'Thus says the Lord'. Thus they were primarily spokespersons for God to his people, denouncing them of their sins, pleasing with them to repent to God,

encouraging them to follow the will of God in all phases of their life.

Israelite prophets were spokespersons for monotheistic Yahwism. Key features of Yahwism that formed the core of prophets are monotheistic, ethical and judgemental dimensions of Yahwism that stood at the centre of the message of each of the ancient Israelite prophets. These three had no parallels in the ANE prophecy, i.e. they were essentially unique and made Israelite prophecy unique. The apodictic law as exemplified in the Decalogue is the basis of monotheistic Yahwism.

'you shall have no other gods before me...' (Exodus 20:3). The apodictic law is believed to be authentic to Israel. If prophets were spokespersons of monotheistic Yahwism, then basically they interpreted the apodictic laws that were at the centre of Yahwism which implies that the prophets spoke and represented that which was unique to Israel.

However scholars like G. Fohrer argue that the apodictic rules of conduct were not necessarily unique to Israel. But one should note that matters of religious principle in the apodictic law had no parallel in the ANE. Prophets were primarily spokespersons of these matters of religious principle that were uniquely Israelite

INTERCESSORS

This is somebody who pleads on behalf of people to Yahweh, e.g. Gen 20:7, Amos 7:1-6. The intercessory role is expressed in the tells of Elijah who helped one the widows of Zarephath to discover in her house oil and milk to keep herself and her son till the next good rains.

CULTIC FUNCTIONARIES

According to Von Rad supported by A. Johnson prophets were cultic office holders though we cannot deny that prophets were somehow linked to the cultic pattern. They were chief representatives of the heavenly council, divinely appointed to proclaim the word of God to the people. They sought no royal or ecclesiastical favours, since their lives were completely directed and decimated by the divine suzerain.

COVENANT MEDIATORS (*See notes above*)

SOCIAL REFORMERS CALLING FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE.

Prophets were speaking on behalf of the less privileged in society and become the mouthpieces of those who had no power to stand for their rights. In times of ill-treatment and injustice such prophets stood for the ordinary people who had no power to confront leaders and kings in society, for example Elijah and Naboth, Nathan and David.

The poor were deprived of land and wealth, widows, the fatherless and the weak

could not protect themselves. Prophets directed their messages to leaders or officials of institutions in society who had power and authority in the social life of Judah and Israel. (1 Kings 21, Amos 5:7-10, Isaiah 1:21-26.

Issues of wealth, pursuit of it and possession of it were also addressed by prophets because they were sources of corruption. Amos' message- rich would build hewn stone houses, large vineyard e.t.c. the most vulnerable in society were oppressed like the widows and orphans- that was violation of justice. Hence message of judgement to the Israelites was a result of injustice

ADJUDICATE INTER-TRIBAL DISPUTES

Before the monarchy prophets would at tribal centres adjudicate inter-tribal disputes. So the designation of a leader of the tribes in time of danger, officiate at the ceremony of covenant. Above all things the leader was there to maintain the categorical law of the covenant in the life of the tribes.

POLITICAL ADVISORS

When kingship was established in Israel much of the responsibility of the former covenant representatives was assumed by the king. However the king was not permitted to become the official spokesperson of the deity. Therefore prophecy was established to check and balance the powers of the kings. Prophets were involved in anointing and dethroning of kings.

Whenever a king is enthroned and dethroned prophets are involved. Here prophets are seen to be playing a leading role in the formation of the kingdom. So at times prophets are regarded as revolutionaries. For religious and social changes to be fully addressed there was need to remove political leaders the argument being that religious and political practices which were a breach to the Sinai covenant were being promoted by the political leadership hence there was need to remove them to promote genuine reform back to the stipulations of the Sinai covenant. Thus it is not surprising to note that whenever a king is enthroned or dethroned, a prophet is being involved e.g. Elisha anointed Jehu while the Omrides were still in power and Jehu's revolution lead to some religious and political change. However it is interesting to note that prophets never headed any movement in Israel, to replace the monarchy with another form of government that it might have been thought to prefer. This is true for there is no indication that the prophetic tradition ever possessed either the taste or the talent for practical politics. Whenever prophecy intervened in these matters, it was not for any other reason but for spiritual reasons.

They were not against monarchical regime, against decline of Israelite law and

custom, against encroachment of the magnets, against apostasy and against

oppression of the humble class of Israel. In fact they were against the institution of the kings which were failing to adequately express loyalty to God. Politics and religion were interwoven and since prophets did not live in ivory tower separated from the lives of their society they were not puppets in the hands of an arbitrary deity. God used prophets as spokespersons without violating their own personalities hence they were not hollow tubes. So they reaffirm Yahweh's sovereign stay in the political sphere in which Israel lived. This made altogether a head on collision with the effect which was made to further Israel's political security especially with diplomacy and policy of military armament. At one point we find prophets giving oracles to attack showing harmonious co-operation between prophets and military leadership. Prophets near the Philistine Garrison in a clear indication that prophets were political. There are there to incite Israelites to engage in holy war against the Philistine enemy.

COURT OFFICIALS

Prophets were consulted when great events were impending mostly before and during wars e.g. Ahab and Jehoshaphat tried to ensure victory over the Arameans at Gilead. Jehoshaphat wished to hear the word of Yahweh and summoned 400 prophets (1 Kings 22). Thus when entering upon important undertaking the king constantly applied to the prophets for the word from God e.g. David had Nathan as his court prophet, Rehoboam had Shemaiah, and Jeroboam had Ahijah. However it is not always the case that prophets were for the kings. Prophet's independence of the king might make him and sensor the king's action, e.g. Ahab hated Micaiah (1 Kings 22:8).

EARLIEST FORMS/MANIFESTATIONS OF PROPHECY IN ISRAEL

FORMS APPROVED IN THE BIBLE

DREAMS

It is an event that is seen by an individual when he/she is asleep. God can visit a person in a dream and speak with him, for example the prophetic call of Samuel was made possible through dream (1 Samuel 3:1ff). In Deuteronomy 13:1ff 'if a prophet has arisen among you or a dreamer of dreams...' clearly points to the existence of this aspect in Ancient Israel. It should be noted that dreams received by non-Israelites needed a Hebrew interpreter, for example Joseph (Genesis 41:25-33) was called from prison to interpret Pharaoh's dream. Daniel also interpreted king Nebuchadnezzar's dream (Daniel 2:24-45).

LOTS(URIM AND THUMMIN)

These were cast to detect a guilty person. In Joshua 7:14-19 Joshua discovered by lots the person who had offended God by taking spoils from the doomed city of Jericho. Achan was caught and was stoned to death in the valley of Achor.

Lots were probably put in a basin and rapidly rotated. The answer was given by a lot which leapt first. this method was sometimes divinatory, e.g. the usage of sacred stones (urim and thumin) in the Old Testament. Urim and thummin were found inside an ephod. It seems according to 1 Samuel 2:18 and 2 Samuel 6:14, the ephod was some kind of a dress like an apron (as the word 'girded' may suggest).

However in 1 Samuel 23:6,9 and 30:7 an ephod was some kind of symbolic vestment that was kept in a sanctuary and would be carried along by the priest or prophet during military expeditions. The urim and thummin were part of this vestment. The main purpose of this practice is to determine the will of the deity or deities on what course of action to take. The objects were religiously symbolic.

Use of sacred stones is found in 1 Samuel 14:41-43. Saul used these stones to detect the guilty action of Jonathan. These objects can be compared to hakata (casting lots) in Zimbabwe. These objects need someone who is a religious official.

The difference is that in Israel the ephod in which the lots are found was some kind of dress whereas in Zimbabwe lots are either bones or dried tree barks or shells of snails or sea creatures or even stones.

Just like hakata urim and thummin (two sides of part of an ephod that were marked differently) were used to determine or to manifest the divine will in terms of yes or no, this one and not that one. The symbolic nature and the fact that the ephod was kept at a sanctuary, it's most probable to have been a priestly object used to perform priestly duties. However determining and interpreting the will of God were usually prophetic functions. So lots in this case fall in the realm of a prophet.

VISION

It is an appearance seen by an individual which is inaccessible to everybody else. The vision may be seen when one is in ecstasy. A person may see either symbol which are interpreted or real experience. Items that may appear in a vision may depend on the prophet's personal background, for example if Isaiah was originally a priest it is understandable that he experienced a vision in the temple. If Amos was a farmer, the imagery drawn in his vision involves pests. Visions are one of God's methods of divine revelation (Numbers 12:6)

ECSTASY (see notes, B.W. Anderson page 250 and Bishau pgs 7-13)

FORBIDDEN METHODS OF PROPHECY/DIVINATORY PRACTICES

There is a strong condemnation of these forms in Deuteronomy 18:10 'There shall not be found among you anyone who burns his son/ daughter as an offering, anyone who practices divination, a soothsayer, an auger, or a sorcerer or a medium, or wizard, or a necromancer...'. Divination is a process of discovering the unknown or the future through supernatural means.

ASTROLOGY

It is the study of heavenly phenomenon, for example stars, moon, sun e.tc. this method was common amongst the Babylonians as they were skilled in foretelling the future from the movement of stars and planets. During the time of Jeremiah he attacked bitterly the worship of the Queen of heaven (the mother goddess (Jeremiah 7:18). This is also condemned in Deuteronomy 4:19.

NECROMANCY

It is the process of seeking guidance from the spirit of the dead. This method is strongly condemned both in Levitical laws and in deuteronomic writings, for example in Leviticus 20:28 'if a person turns to medium and wizards playing the harlot after them, I will set my face against that person and will cut him off from among his people'. Though condemned this practice was still practiced in the eighth century (Isaiah 8:19-20).

Necromancy includes two ideas:

- Worship of ancestors
- The dead being consulted to determine the future.

1Samuel 28:1ff Saul consulted the witch of Endor to raise the spirit of Samuel who was dead.

HEPASTROPHY

It is the process of divining from the liver of the sacrificed animal. Ezekiel 21:21 'For the king of Babylon stands at the parting of the way, at the head of two ways to use divination he shakes the arrows, he consult the teraphim, he looks at the liver'. It was only commonly practiced among the Babylonians.

HYDROMANCY

This refers to the use of water or it is divination by water. It is alluded to in Joseph

narratives in genesis 44:5. 'it is not from this that my Lord drinks, and by this that he divines...'

RHABDOMANCY

This refers to the use of divining sticks or casting of arrows as in Ezekiel 21:21. The same method is indirectly alluded to in Hosea 4:12 'My people inquire of a thing of wood and their staff gives them oracles...' a thing of wood could have been play with words which might be a reference to divining rods or sticks.

RERAPHIM

The use of teraphim or household images was quite common among people of Mesopotamia and Palestine. They were a sign of authority and land ownership but were also used for the purpose of divining. This method is alluded in Zechariah 10:2 'For the teraphim utters nonsense...'

DISCUSS THE EARLIEST FORMS OF PROPHECY IN ISRAEL AND OUTLINE THE FUNCTIONS OF EARLY ISRAELITE PROPHETS.

HOW AND WHY PROPHETIC BOOKS WERE COMPILED AND PRESERVED

1. Small collections of the sayings of the prophet were made during the prophet's lifetime, by the prophet or his disciples. Message was the product of the community and not individual. Sons of the prophets are known to also have had a task of preserving prophetic traditions.
2. Transmission through a number of unidentified generations. Units of tradition developed independently and circulated orally independently.
3. When sayings came to the attention of civic or religious authorities they must have been widely reported, for example Amaziah the priest in charge at Bethel, was able to quote a saying of Amos as grounds of extraditing him (Amos 7:11) and his trial for treason.
4. In some cases sayings and stories would have circulated in groups of disciples to be consigned to writing only when memories began to fade.
5. Utterances of professional prophets were probably preserved among the temple and court records.
6. Later on the words were put together into small units of literature (periscopes) following a number of criteria, for example if it had common subject matter or tradition used the same catch words, for example 'For three transgressions and for four...' or common theology, for example 2 Kings 2 where we have a series of miracles.
7. Redactors later compiled periscopes into continuous narratives.

CHARACTERISTICS OF PRIMITIVE PROPHECY IN ISRAEL (PRE-CANONICAL PROPHECY)

1. They operated in groups/bands/guilds.
2. They needed music in order for them to be turned into the prophetic mood
3. It was contagious in nature
4. Miracles were more pronounced during this period.
5. Their messages were not written down
6. Early prophets were seers or visionaries who had clairvoyant powers.
7. They were ecstasies

WHY WERE THEY COMPILED

- Political disasters, for example the fall of Jerusalem and subsequent deportation, seem to have provided a powerful stimulus to the preservation of prophetic sayings. Probably the first compilation of prophetic material dates back from this time.
- To preserve prophetic material.
- To record and deposit after disappointment as proof in the event of future fulfilment of his/her prophecy.
- So that the prophecy might benefit by providing lessons to future generations (posterity).
- To keep the prophetic tradition alive.
- To maintain a reliable record of the prophetic literature.

'PROPHETS SHOULD NOT BE SEEN AS AUTHORS AND POETS (H. GUNKEL) BUT AS MESSENGERS OF Yahweh (J. ROSS)'. EVALUATE THESE TWO PERSPECTIVES ON ISRAELITE PROPHETS.

AUTHORS

According to H. Gunkel prophets were authors in their own right who were particularly poets because of the nature of their works and how they delivered their message.

In their writing prophets used poetic devices, these include repetition, for example linking (initial, cross and final linking), parallelism in the case of Hebrew poetry- initial, final, synonymous and synthetic parallelism.

Apart from repetition prophets also play with words (paronomasia) and panning, onomatopoeia and other poetic devices to this effect. The form of some oracles, for example arrangement in stanzas may also be cited to demonstrate the same point..

WEAKNESSES

Arrangement into stanzas of prophetic oracles is a later development that cannot be attributed to the prophets. Also, even at the point of delivering their message,

sometimes it was their secretaries who captured and wrote the words and these were the people responsible for the artistic skills that went into writing of the prophetic books and not the prophets themselves.

PROPHETS WERE MESSENGERS OF YAHWEH.

Prophets were messengers of Yahweh because of the nature of their task and also how they delivered their message. This is primarily based on the definition of the term Nabi as someone who speak on behalf of another. When applied to Israelite prophecy a Nabi was a messenger of Yahweh who communicated the divine will. The use of the messenger style or prophetic formula, 'thus says the Lord...' can be used to support that they were messengers of Yahweh.

Prophets received calls from Yahweh. They were not men of self-appointed ministries. The implication therefore is that the source of their authority was Yahweh.

ECSTACY

According to B.W Anderson, ecstasy is an experience of being overcome with an emotion so powerful that self control or reason may be suspended. It does not arise from mere emotional rapture but from the spirit (ruah) of Yahweh which falls upon a person. It takes control of the self and makes one an instrument of divine will. In such a state unusual things happen, eg Elijah overtook the chariot of Ahab (1 Kings 18), Saul stripped off clothes and lay naked (1 S amuel 19:19-24). It transforms a prophet i.e made him another man (1 Samuel 10:6).

It can be divided into three categories:

1. Contagious i.e electric eg when Saul met a band of prophets on his way to Gibeah and fall into ecstasy.
2. Orgiastic eg Elijah overtook the chariot of Ahab from Mt Carmel to Jezreel.
3. Passive eg when Elisha visited Damascus, Hazel came to see him in order to seek an oracle about Benhadad's sickness and Elisha told him that he shall die. Elisha then gazed and stared steadily at him and he burst into tears.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ECSTACY AND PROPHECY

Some scholars argue that the term prophet originated from the agitated behavior of ecstatics. According to Robinson no Hebrew prophet would venture to prophecy without an initial experience of an extra- ordinary character, that is, ecstasy. It served as the climate of prophecy. Certainly this condition was the medium of genuine

religious experience in which true conduct with God was achieved.

According to J. Lindblom ecstasy was physical evidence which showed that someone has the spirit of Yahweh. It gave prophets authority hence distinguished them from ordinary people, eg is Saul among the prophets? it was normally induced by music and it had influence in politics eg Deborah led people in war and inspire them with music. Prophetic guilds, for example those stationed near the Philistine garrison were functional in the holy wars. Music was used to induce patriotism in people. The analogy of other groups of Yahweh's devotees such as the Rechabites are the prophetic guilds. Association of Saul with the sons of the prophets after he had been set aside to deliver Israel suggest that they were a religio- patriotic movement making use of dervish techniques.

MODE OF OPERATION OF PROPHETIC GUILDS

1. The ecstasies lived in bands (groups) under the leadership of a father (ab) and they were the sons of the prophet (bene hannebiim). The father's spirit was shared among the sons (Numbers 11, 2 Kings 2, 1 Sam 19:24). The function of the chief prophet was to teach the sons the secrets of the prophetic office while the sons supported and legitimized the authority of the father.
2. Ecstasy was induced by music (2 Kings 3:15)
3. Ecstatic/ frenzied behavior.
4. Decentralization of community households for example some lived in Bethel, Gilgal, Jericho (2 Kings 2:1-5)
5. Prophesied violently (1 Kings 18:28)
6. Use symbolic acts to demonstrate (1 Kings 22)
7. They use slogan to refer to the leaders as chariot and its horsemen (2 Kings 13:12,14).

FUNCTIONS/ACTIVITIES OF PROPHETIC GUILDS

- v. The ecstasies lived in bands (groups) under the leadership of a father (ab) and they were the sons of the prophet (bene hannebiim). The father's spirit was shared among the sons (Numbers 11, 2 Kings 2, 1 Sam 19:24). The function of the chief prophet was to teach the sons the secrets of the prophetic office while the sons supported and legitimized the authority of the father. Probably, prophecy like the office of the priest had to go through some form of learning. So maybe the responsibility of the father was to authenticate that one has undergone through all stages and therefore qualified as a prophet. The assumption here is that if prophets used cultic objects, it simply meant that one had to learn and prophecy is not something that comes spontaneously (2 Kings 4:38-41). So they were professionally trained and perhaps paid for a service, eg Ahijah is being paid when he delivered the message of Jeroboam (1 Kings 14).

- vi. The father anointed and would send sons to anoint kings vindicating the leadership of the anointed individual by bestowing upon them certain charisma (2 kings 9). So they were messengers of the fathers who would at one point anoint kings.
- vii. The sons in particular acted as political commissars and would gather at military garrisons in a bid to boost the morale of the anointed kings and their soldiers as they fight against their enemies. So they were functional during holy wars, eg when Israel fought against the Philistines, the guilds were stationed near the philistine garrison, probably to weaken the enemy by proclaiming their defeat in advance as well as chanting war songs. So they function as a military band.
- viii. They were upholders of monotheism just like their fathers.
- ix. They were industrious that is they could cook, farm, gather food for themselves.
- x. They could also prophecy.
- xi. They also had cultic functions. They were experts at intercessory prayers. Some of them acted as temple personnel.

COMPARE AND CONTRAST PROPHETIC BANDS IN ANCIENT ISRAEL AND SIMILAR PHENOMENON IN AN AFRICAN INDEPENDENT CHURCH OF YOUR CHOICE IN ZIMBABWE.

Zviratidzo (revelations) and its splinter groups Mabasa evapositioni (acts of apostles) and dhambuza.

SIMILARITIES

1. Secret place of meeting (mativi mana) a mysterious place.
2. The presence of a father who is the chief trainer and the surrounding disciples who are apprentices.
3. Basic process of incubation that the graduates from there talk about, that includes the secrets of healing and performing miracles.
4. Inducement of ecstasy through music and dance.

DIFFERENCES

Kind of recruits and their backgrounds are different. It seems apprentices in the African independent churches are drawn from those candidates who initially were possessed by spirits making demands upon them to be traditional healers and through some mysterious process the spirit is cleansed and converted/ termed so that these people can now be healers within the church.

Miracles performed almost always have to do with healing and their prophesy always involves witch hunting. This is a marked difference with Ancient Israelite prophetic bands.

HOW ECSTASY ORIGINATE IN ISRAEL

Ecstasy like prophecy is a borrowed phenomenon from the Ancient Near East. Its ultimate origin is traced back to Thrace where it spread into Greece as a cult of Dionysius and into Asia Minor and Syria. It is likely Israel first becomes acquainted with ecstatic prophecy in Canaan where it was connected with Baal religion. Baal prophets imported it from Phoenicia. Probably Israelites borrowed ecstatic prophecy from the Canaanites as it did so much else. This is supported by the fact that there are similarities between Israelite ecstasy and Ancient Near East, eg the Mesha- stele found in Dibon in the Jordan region dated in the ninth century. The stele records a command relayed to king Mesha from the Moabite God Kemish to attack a town called Nebo. The message was relayed by an ecstatic figure eg the Elijah and Elisha narratives reveal a close conduct between Israel and Canaanite cities and testify to the existence of a certain type of orgiastic prophecy imported into Israel by Jezebel the wife of Ahab.

There are some similarities between 450 prophets of Baal and the sons of a prophet associated with Elijah and Elisha. The Elijah- Elisha narratives reveal a close contact between Israel and Phoenician cities and testify to the existence of a certain type of orgiastic prophecy imported into Israel by Jezebel- the queen. The Wen Amon incident is another example of ecstatic prophecy in the ancient Near east similar to that of Israel. In the Mari text there are reports about several communications from the deities eg Dagan, Adad to Zimri lim. These messages are reported to have been passed through ecstatic (Muhhum) employed in a temple. The Mesha stele found in Dibon in the Jordan region that is dated in the 9th century. The stela records a command relayed to King Mesha from the MOABITE GOD Kemish to attack a town called Nebo. The message was relayed by an ecstatic figure. Some scholars like Blenkinsopp argue that there is huge material in the Mari letters dealing with ecstatic intermediaries that characterize what must have been a fairly standard pattern in the ANE urban centres with which Israel had ties. In fact both ANE and Israelite ecstasy were stimulated by rhythm of music and body movements (3:15). Body is stimulated into hyper-action. However scholars observed that Israelite ecstasy was not just a mere emotional rapture but was from the spirit of Yahweh (ruah). Moreover rarely do we find Israelite prophets delivering their message in ecstasy. Basing on the definition of ecstasy, that is, suspension of self-consciousness, some scholars argue that there is a difficulty that arises with trying to understand Israelite prophets solely as ecstasies because going by the definition it would appear Israelite prophets were not ecstatic. They argue that Israelite prophets never lost their consciousness. Texts cited to support the view that Israelite prophets were ecstasies are not explicit eg

Numbers 11:11-30 is said to be anachronistic. Moreover there is no equivalent Hebrew term for ecstasy. Though scholars may accept that Israelite prophets were ecstatic it seems this phenomenon was prevailing during early phases of prophecy and seems to be studiously avoided by classical prophets. B.W Anderson argues that if prophecy was borrowed what was borrowed was transformed to suit the Israelite environment.

ECSTASY AS AN ISRAELITE PHENOMENON

It appear for the first time in the reliable records of Israel in connection with the election of Saul who instituted the prophetic guilds (1 Samuel 10:1, 1 Samuel 19:24). These prophets are connected with political situation during the philistine oppression of Israel. The source of the ecstatic experience is the spirit of God. Samuel probably aligned with them because of their loyalty to Yahweh. However its likely that ecstatic prophets existed prior to Samuel but they were taken for granted (1 Samuel 3:1). Most scholars interpret Numbers 11:10-30, that is the incident of the ordination of the 70 elders as marking the beginning of ecstatic prophecy in the wilderness. In this case ecstasy originated within Israel and was God inspired. Scholars like Blenkinsopp may argue that this passage appears to legitimize ecstatic prophecy by deriving it from the spirit of Moses which itself had divine origin. Spirit transferred from Moses to the elders caused them to prophecy ecstatically. However this view has been criticized by M. Noth. For him it is doubtful whether this is an authentic episode from the Mosaic period. In the judgement of many scholars this is anachronistic. Anachronism is the story teller's technique or description of the Mosaic period in terms of language or experience of a later time. One can conclude that ecstasy is part and parcel of the earliest forms of prophecy in Israel.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PROPHECY AND THE CULT

The relationship between prophet and priest and prophet and cultus is not clear. At one time it was customary to find in Hebrew religion a tension between prophet and priest or cult.⁹ At present it is more common to find scholars suggesting that prophets may have been a part of the cultus, associated with priests in cultic ritual. As we shall see, anti-cultic pronouncements of the eighth century prophets appear to give support to the first hypothesis, but there is a considerable amount of evidence to lend credence to the second. The prophets encountered by Saul were from the shrine at Gibeath-elohim, "the hill of the gods" (I Sam. 10:5). The prophet Samuel was trained by the priest Eli and performed as a priest. As we shall see, Ezekiel, the prophet, had priestly interests. Isaiah received his summons to prophesy within the temple precincts. Aubrey Johnson has proposed that prophets and priests worked side by side in Yahweh shrines and in the Jerusalem temple, and he concludes that when the prophets criticized, they stood within the cultus seeking to correct abuses. For him prophecy formed a free but intimate cult association.

S. Mowinkel argues that prophecy was connected with the cult. scholars argue that

prophecy evolved from priesthood. The argument being that, because of the inadequacy and corrupt tendencies of the priestly office as demonstrated by the sons of Eli, the lack of the voice of the Lord during time of Eli necessitated Samuel's call. Priests and Levites were considered to be gifted with the spirit of Yahweh. They were consulted by the local people for the guidance of Yahweh. This function is also applicable to the prophets, e.g. Samuel was consulted for the lost ass, Ahijah is consulted by Jeroboam's wife pertaining the illness of their child. Prophetic guilds were linked to cultic centres. Gad is referred to as David's seer. Elisha is visited by a Shunamite woman at the cult. So there is an overlapping of the functions of a seer, prophet and priest. Prophets were either permanently or temporarily connected with sanctuaries.

FUNCTIONS

1. Giving oracles
2. Helping in battles and offering sacrifices
3. Interceding.
4. They were experts in prayer
5. Reception of revelation is always found around the cult

The role of the prophets as set forth in the prophetic writings is to proclaim Yahweh's word or, as the term *nabi* implies, to act as Yahweh's spokesmen. During the past half century, prophetic utterances have been subjected to form critical analysis, and it has been demonstrated that oracular forms stem from cultic, legal, heraldic and other sociocultural sources. Some utterances, such as those of Amos, may be associated with festal occasions like the New Year observance. Judgment pronouncements reflect forms used in law court statements or in proclamations by a royal messenger. Some salvation oracles employ patterns used in lamentation rituals or in minstrelsy. The results of form critical studies should not be used to anchor the prophets in any of the groups from which they borrowed their literary forms, but rather to demonstrate the versatility of the spokesmen for God who were capable of employing many well-known literary patterns to communicate their message.

It is often pointed out that prophets demonstrate extensive knowledge of Hebrew traditions. This is true, but the prophets are not confined by past history. Woven through the prophetic works are references to major themes of the salvation history of the nation: election or choice of the people by God, the Exodus or the saving-preservation of the people, the covenant bonds, the occupation of Canaan with divine help, and the Davidic line with its messianic-kingship overtones.

There were various means of determining the will of Yahweh at cultic centres. There are also various types of oracles, e.g. judgement, assurance and salvation oracles. There are places well known for oracle giving, e.g. Elisha and the Shunamite woman refer to the new moon and Sabbath suggesting the time to receive an oracle. So the function of the Old Testament prophets in association with the cult as an institution is not in question. The real question has to do with the extent of the association

But, as we shall see, the prophets also turned away from traditions: Amos reversed

the popular concept of "Yahweh's day" and Jeremiah proposed a new covenant to replace the old.

The prophets also challenged current practices. Cultic ritual, with its emphasis upon what a man does in ritual, is played down, and moral themes, concerned with what a man is in human associations, are emphasized.¹¹

Thus, the prophets should not be universally categorized as anti-cultic preachers, as upholders of past traditions, as predictors of the future or as moralists. They are best recognized as charismatic personalities, men under the compulsion of an experience that causes them to utter, despite opposition, challenge, mockery and imprisonment, the words they believed to be Yahweh's words given to them, words representing Yahweh's will, Yahweh's intentions, Yahweh's purposes, and Yahweh's action. Their concern was with their own immediate present. If the understanding and interpretation of that immediate present demanded recollections from the past or indications of what the future might hold, then past and future were utilized. If the best and most meaningful presentation called for dramatic enactment, utilizing legal or mourning or folksong modes of utterance, then these forms were used. To resist the demands of God or to flee from their assigned role was impossible. One could only respond to what Yahweh required and suffer the consequences in the conviction that Yahweh would prove the utterance to be true.

How Yahweh's word came is not known. Rites of incubation, in which the individual slept in a holy place and received a message in dreams or visions, were practiced in the Near East. When Daniel (or Dan'el) in the Ugaritic story of Aqht desired a son, he spent seven days and nights in the sanctuary until he received a revelation.¹² Incubation rites were not unknown to the Hebrews,¹³ but there is no clear evidence that prophetic messages were received through this technique. Nevertheless visions were experienced, for Isaiah's prophetic summons came in a vision in the temple area, and visionary patterns appear in the prophecies of Amos, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and others.¹⁴

Free association rites are known to have been utilized by seers. The whole mind and personality of the seer is focused upon a single item, or problem; all else is blanked out in what might best be described as a trance state. A train of thought is begun leading to an answer to the problem or to an oracle. There is, as we shall see, some indication that the prophets may have utilized some form of this technique, acquiring oracles from concentration on a pot of boiling water (Jer. 1:13 f.) or on a man testing a wall (Amos 7:7 f.).

Some prophetic oracles reflect personal experiences either social or introspective. Some of Hosea's proclamations grew out of his unfortunate marriage and some of Jeremiah's out of vilification by his countrymen. On the other hand, certain of Jeremiah's and Isaiah's experiences were personal and inward, suggesting that they developed out of inward listening or concentration that produced mental images, mental communication culminating in what might be termed an "ineffable experience" (cf. Jer. 20:7-9).¹⁵

Perhaps it is best to generalize and describe prophetic experiences as many and

varied. Lack of detailed information in the Bible prevents, in the light of present knowledge, real precision in analysis.

The clash between prophets and priests has been taken by some scholars to mean that they are two distinct groups. Prophets were not necessarily against the cult but its abuse. The two offices co-existed. Cult was from the beginning, the tangible expression of the faith of Israel. It was the rehearsal of God's mighty deeds and his self-disclosure of the past.

Anti-cultic verses, e.g. Amos 5:3, Isaiah 1:11-12 are against formalization of exterior worship when it had no corresponding interior dispositions. Israel had come to believe that rituals and ceremony could atone for their sins. God rejects the paraphernalia of external observance unless it is accompanied by social justice and consideration for the underprivileged. Prophets insisted that mere outward forms divorced from inward meaning and practices of genuine purity are resented. God's concern is with moral obedience and not prescribed rules. Examples to support this are 1 Samuel 15:22, Hosea 6:6, Amos 5:21-25, Isaiah 1:10-15, Jeremiah 6:20, 7:22-23. Prophets were against the cult because it had become so much institutionalized, their concern was that it had become devoid of sincerity. It had been practiced by immoral people who were syncretic and apostate.

Yahwistic prophetism almost certainly remains in close rapport with the cult. They sometimes spoke the language of the cult. However it does not necessarily follow that the great Old Testament prophet was a cult or guild prophet. Prophets and priests were not so positively and constantly opposed as sometimes assumed. It is significant that these figures were the most highly ranked in the tradition of Judaism. Moses and Elijah had dual role of priest and prophet. Moses was a Levite and Elijah conducted sacrifices. In fact prophets operated within the established priesthood and ceremonial ritual established by Moses. Sacrifices were a means of expressing obedience.

However prophets emphasized that sacrifices were not to be an end in themselves as Israel thought, but they were a means to an end. Prophets were seen at cultic centres as experts at intercessory prayers. They were there to bring people's petitions to God and communicate divine answers indicating whether or not the sacrifice was accepted by God. On special religious festivals such as covenant renewal they may have an important announcement of the demands and promises of the covenant. Prophets were also court advisors e.g. Nathan a court prophet sanctioned the rule of the Davidic dynasty.

METHODS USED BY PROPHETS TO DELIVER THEIR

MESSAGES

SYMBOLIC ACTIONS

B.W Anderson defined symbolic actions as 'acted out parables'. They were oracles in a prophet's book which were acted in real life. These oracles were connected to the message to be delivered. They disclose the message of Yahweh to the people and they emphasise the main ideas of the message so that people can easily understand the message.

Quite a number of prophets gave their children symbolic names so that they may be walking signs or placards to the people. The prophet Moses gave his sons symbolic names; Gershom which reminds Israelites that they were 'Sojourners' and 'Eliezer' which reminds them of deliverance from Pharaoh (Exodus 18:3-4). The prophet Hosea also gave his children symbolic names: Jezreel named in connection with Jehu's blood bath in the valley of Jezreel, Not pitied meaning Yahweh's patience was exhausted and finally Not my people showing that Yahweh had dissolved the covenant between him and Israel. In fact the names of Hosea's children demonstrate the deterioration of the relationship between Yahweh and Israel. However God's judgement was not his last word. After punishment these names were reversed showing that Yahweh had reconciled with his people.

The prophet Isaiah also had named his children symbolic names so that they will be visual aids. He gave one of his sons the name Shear Jashub meaning 'a remnant shall return' after the Syro-Ephramite crisis. He also gave his second son the name 'Maher shalal hash baz' meaning 'the speed spoil hastens', pointing to the weakness of the coalition. The only symbolic actions performed by the prophets. False prophets also performed actions. The prophet Zedekiah the son of Chenaah made himself iron horns symbolizing victory. It was during a military campaign against Syria over the city of Ramoth Gilead. Ahab the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat the king of Judah joined together against Syria and before they went for a war they inquired of the Lord from the four hundred court prophets of Baal who belonged to King Ahab. With one accord they promised these two kings, 'go up for the Lord will give it into the hand of the king'. THE two kings were assured of victory, that is when Zedekiah proceeded to make iron horns in a bid to induce belief in the two kings that surely the Lord commanded or gave them this to be a false prophet when the two kings were defeated by Syria and king Ahab died. Hence the efficiency of this method was questionable chiefly because it was also used by false prophets.

This method was a common method that Jeremiah used. Some of the symbolic actions in the book of Jeremiah are:

1. The pot in the hands of a potter - a symbolic action which demonstrate that

Yahweh was there to punish Israel as a corrective measure.

2. The broken pottery in the valley of Hinnom or Topeth which symbolize doom.
3. Jeremiah's purchase of the land at Anathoth symbolizing restoration.
4. A yoke bar in the prophet's neck which symbolize Babylonian exile and slavery. Hananiah the false prophet broke his bars and assured the Judeans that the exile period was not going to last for 70 years as prophesied by Jeremiah. He prophesied that it was to last for two years. Jeremiah proceeded to make iron yoke bars in a bid to prove to his audience the certainty of the impending catastrophe.

The accounts contain:

3. God's instruction to perform the action.
4. A description of the action itself
5. An explanation of its meaning
6. They sometimes include a statement made to onlookers.
7. As in a vision emphasis in the text is not on the action but on the lesson conveyed by the action- usually that God was going to act either against or on behalf of his people (Hosea 1:1-2)

SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS METHOD

1. Symbolic action acted as visual aids to the audience aid memory. They served not only to represent and make evident a particular fact, but also to make this fact a reality.
2. They tease the mind into active thought. In fact they deny the hearers the attitude of a spectator. So they were meant to arouse the emotions of fear or hope, according to circumstances. Thus what was done powerfully reinforced what is said. Symbolic actions represent, indicate, point to or demonstrate. Therefore they point beyond themselves to something else. They served to represent to the bystanders an object, an occurrence, a course of events which were of particular significance. Therefore there is a connection with the total message of the prophet.
3. They were used to attract the attention of the people. They always had such a structure as to evoke in the consciousness of the bystanders the fact which the prophet had in mind.
4. They were meant to illustrate seriousness of the actions basing on the philosophy that actions are more effective than words.
5. They express God's intentions, e.g. destruction. They are symbolic ways in which God intends to act towards his people.
6. It helped people to remember, see, judge and act. According to Lindblom prophets frequently acted in unusual ways in order to derive home the oracles they uttered.

WEAKNESSES

1. Scholar by the name Edmund Sigmund view symbolic actions as signs of sheer madness and sign of exhibitionism. After a close analysis between Israelite prophets who performed symbolic actions and his insane patience on the issue of behavior and he come to conclude that symbolism is sheer madness.
2. It was problematic because false prophets used this method.

SONGS (FUNERAL DIERGE)/ LAMENT

The prophet Amos in 5:2 sung a funeral song to the Israelites when he wanted to prove his audience the inevitability of doom that he was pronouncing. This is a funeral lament over Israel as if she were a corpse ready for burial. He saw Israel in a coffin waiting for burial. Attached to the song is the issue of lament which usually begins with a woe cry (woe...) Amos 5:18, 4:4-5, Isaiah 5:1ff. woe speech is a pronouncement whose tone is deep and full of grief. It is introduced with catch word, 'Woe to you...' (Amos 6:4-6)

PARABLES

Parables are comparisons which use story telling techniques and details drawn from everyday life experiences in order to present religious truth in a way which attracts the attention of the listener or reader by its vividness or strangeness and thus provokes further reflection and appropriate action.

When prophet Nathan rebuked king David for his sins in seducing Uriah's wife Bathsheba and murdering him. Nathan used a parable of the richman who took a poor man's only lamb. The use of parables for sinners to condemn themselves is a prophetic device (2 Samuel 12:1-14). David was made to condemn himself. David was also caught out again in the same way by the wise woman of terkoa (2 Samuel 14:1-23). The same method was used by the prophet Isaiah in 5:1ff, when he used the parable of the vineyard where Judah was considered as the chosen vine planted on fertile and well prepared land but regardless of the efforts made to ensure a good harvest the field yielded wild fruits.

The parable was given to express God's love for Judah and also to justify punishment that should be given to the Judeans. God's love is shown by his care in planting his vineyard. He punishes it because it could not produce the fruit of obedience, hence punishment was inevitable.

The prophet Jeremiah also employed the same method when he wanted to prove to Judah that Yahweh was going to spoil the pride of Judah, in the parable of the waist cloth (Jeremiah 13:1-11). In Jeremiah 18:1-17 he gave another parable of

the potter. In the parable Jeremiah wanted to deliver the message that Yahweh was going to punish the Judeans as a corrective measure. In his advice to Zedekiah and those who had survived the first deportation he gave the parable of the good and the bad figs. In the parable Jeremiah considered the exiles as good figs. (Jer 24:1-10)

SIGNIFICANCE

- They were used as weapons of warfare in response to criticism of opponents.
- To deny the hearers the attitude of a spectator. So they tease the mind into active thought.
- It is one of the varied ways through which prophets spoke about the sphere of God's kingly rule and power which demands obedience.
- As a challenge to mythically built world

WEAKNESSES

The message could be interpreted differently by the audience. For example Nathan's parable to David, David did not know that the rich man in the story was referring to him. So the prophet's message was not received as anticipated.

MIRACLES

Miracle is something that happens contrary to nature. It is an extra-ordinary event. This method was used by prophets to show that the spirit of god was working through them. Prophets used this as a way of inducing belief in their audience that they were not merely ordinary beings, but were being used as mouthpieces of Yahweh.

Deuteronomy 13:1-12 seem to suggest that miracles were one way people could use to distinguish true from false prophets. 'if a prophet has arisen among you, or a dreamer of dreams or gives you a sign and what he tells you come to pass...'

The archetypal figure Moses performed quite a number of miracles:

1. Changing the rod into a serpent before Pharaoh.
2. Changing water into blood
3. Ten plagues
4. Struck waters of the Red Sea and parted
5. Provision of manna and quails
6. Make bitter water sweet
7. Struck the rock with his rod when they run out of water.

Elijah and Elisha were carbon copies of Moses. Elijah in his battle with Baalism performed miracles. In 1 Kings 17:1ff he announced drought to prove that it was

Yahweh who provided rains and not Baal.

- Elijah multiplied the food of the widow of Zarephath.
- Called fire from heaven to consume sacrifice (1Kings 18:31ff)
- Raised the widow of Zarephath's son.
- Struck the waters of Jordan and water parted
- Killed 400 prophets of Baal single handedly
- Taken to heaven by whirlwind

ELISHA

1. Healed Naaman the leper (2 Kings 5:1ff)
2. Raised the Shunamite woman's son from the dead (2Kings 4:8-25)
3. Purified the water at Jericho (2 Kings 2:19-25)
4. Filled the trenches with water during the battle with the Moabites (2 Kings 3:4ff)
5. Floated the axe.

All the above were messages sent by means of miracles. They point to prophets as messengers of Yahweh, revealing Yahweh's compassion and since illness was linked with evil these miracles were significant in the fight against evil.

RHETORIC QUESTIONS

These were questions which required no answer. They were there to provoke the audience to ponder seriously about the prophet's message. When prophets used this method they wanted the audience to answer themselves.

Amos used this method quite often, for example Amos 9:7 'Are you not like the Ethiopians to me...' Here Amos wanted the Israelites to notice that they were no longer coddled. Yahweh had desecrated them because of their failure to comply with the covenant stipulations. Amos 3 is full of these rhetoric questions. Jeremiah 13:22-23 also used this method. 'can the Ethiopian change his skin...'

WEAKNESSES

At times this method is rather confusing especially to the audience who had preconceived understanding of God. For example, 'Are you not like the Ethiopians...'. Israelites fail to grasp this since they regarded themselves as sacred and unique nation not to be compared with surrounding nations, worse still with their enemies.

LETTERS/ DELEGATION

At times prophets passed their responsibilities to their audience through

disciples. This method was convenient where the prophet was barred from talking to his audience direct. For example during the reign of Jehoakim the prophet Jeremiah having been labelled a public enemy and a traitor was banned from prophesying in the name of Lord. Jeremiah dictated his oracles to his secretary Baruch whom he sent to Jehoakim with the scroll. He instructed Baruch to read the scroll before the king.

Jeremiah also wrote a letter to the exiles in Jeremiah 29. In the letter he informed the exiles that exilement was to last for 70 years in contrary to Hannaniah a false prophet who had predicted that it was to last for two years.

WEAKNESSES

Though this method was effective, since a prophet could convey message to a distant audience, this method had also some limitations in that there were certain areas which needed emphasis and further explanations which might not have been heard or seen from the message.

SERMON/ ORACULAR FORMULA

Prophets could use word of mouth to convey their messages to the audience. They normally use messenger style or prophetic formula, 'Thus says the Lord...' or 'Hear this word that the Lord had spoken...' (Amos 1:3,6,9, 3:1). This was meant to convince their audience that the message was not from their thinking but from the one who sent them. They were claiming that their authority was from Yahweh.

Attached to this method is the issue of sermons where a prophet took advantage of a gathering, say temple worshippers, e.g. Jeremiah 7 and 26 and deliver message to the people.

WEAKNESSES

False prophets also claimed to have appointed by Yahweh and also use the messenger style, e.g. Zedekiah the son of Chenaanah (1 Kings 22:11) and Hannaniah (Jeremiah 28:2ff). So at times it was difficult to distinguish true and false prophets since both were claiming to have been sent by Yahweh.

ALLEGORY

An allegory is considered as an imagery story whose details have a direct application to a real life situation, that is, the characters in the story corresponds with something else in a real life situation, e.g. Hosea's matrimonial experience is

often interpreted as an allegory and not historical event. It was actually an imaginary story which was given to visualize the relationship that was between Israel and Yahweh.

IMAGERY/ METAPHORICAL LANGUAGE/ PICTORIAL LANGUAGE

It was a method used by prophets to deliver their message in pictorial form. A prophet could select words which would create pictures to the minds of the audience, e.g. Amos 3:12 where Amos pictured the useless remnant that was going to be saved from the coming punishment as follows; 'As a shepherd rescues from the mouth of the lion two legs or a piece of an ear, so shall the people of Israel who dwell in Samaria be rescued'

The prophet Hosea more often than not used metaphorical language and comparisons especially when he was describing the sins of Israel. To begin with his matrimonial experiences which is given as part and parcel of his call narrative was meant to be comparable to Israel's harlotry and infidelity.

According to Hosea 1:2, he was asked to take a wife of harlotry and have children of harlotry chiefly because the Israelites had forsaken their Lord, going after other gods. In some instances he compared Israel to half-baked cake 7:11, stubborn heifer 4:16. Israel's love is compared to a morning cloud and dew, 6:4. Jeremiah call his audience not to deviate from their Lord just as the leopard does not change its spots or an Ethiopian his skin.

TRUE AND FALSE PROPHETS

CRITERIA USED TO DISTINGUISH TRUE AND FALSE PROPHETS

Since around 2009, Zimbabwe has witnessed an unprecedented surge of Christian preachers who call themselves prophets/esses. Characteristically, these so-called prophets/esses claim to work miracles; especially miracles that 'contradict' nature. This has earned them multitudes of both admirers and critics. Interestingly, while admirers and followers quote the Bible to endorse them as true prophets, critics and sceptics also cite the same Bible to characterise them as false prophets. The purpose of this article is to prove that by appealing to the Bible, both camps are wrong. The Bible does not have water-tight criteria to distinguish true from false prophets. In other words, there is no distinction between a true and a false prophet in the Bible because fundamentally they are both called prophets! The article claims that the Bible is the source of confusion and not the solution to the debate regarding the distinction between true and false in the contemporary world.

Zimbabwe has recently seen not only an increase in the number of Christian movements that have so far radically transformed the Christian landscape, but it

has also seen an eruption of a phenomenon of 'prophets' that perform 'strange' miracles. From 2009, names that include, prophet Emmanuel Makandiwa and wife, prophetess Ruth of United Family International Church, Uebert Angel and wife, prophetess Beverly, prophet Tavonga Vutabwashe of Heartfelt International Ministries, prophet Passion Java and wife prophetess Yasmin of Kingdom Embassy, prophet Adventure Mutepfa (Revival Centre World Ministry), prophet Oliver Chipunza and prophetess Makanyara (now late) of Apostolic Flame Ministries of Zimbabwe, have made news headlines. In media terminology, stories about their exploits could be regarded as the most trending. And their popularity is increasing by the day. Generating much interest is their claim to perform 'extra-ordinary' miracles such as filling pockets, wallets and hands of believers with bank notes and gold nuggets. After prayer, followers open their eyes only to find their pockets and wallets full of money and gold nuggets in their palms. These prophets claim to heal any kind of sickness such as cancer, HIV, AIDS and even raise the dead. In full view of their congregations, some have caused people to instantly stop smoking, instantly lose weight up to 30kgs, and instantly grow full teeth that had long fallen. They usually confound their congregations by telling them their house numbers, cell phone numbers, Identity Numbers (IDs), car registration numbers and the colours of undergarments their followers would be wearing. Other 'extra ordinary' miracles include children being born only after three days or just hours of conception and increasing fuel in cars instead of it getting used up as one drives. They also specialise in making accurate predictions of events that will happen in the near and distant future. In short, their miracles follow closely those performed by West African Pentecostal prophets such as T.B. Joshua of Synagogue Church of All Nations, Pastor Chris Ayakhilome of Christ Embassy (both of Nigeria) and Victor Kusi Boateng of Ghana who is Makandiwa's spiritual mentor, Godfather. All these miracles and the doctrine of prosperity which is the anchor of their preaching are therefore not entirely unknown in Zimbabwe and in Africa at large. They have been heard of; even in the history of Christianity such events and teachings are not new. In fact, in the Bible, working miracles seems to be one of the preoccupations of Israelite prophets, especially pre-classical ones.

For instance, Abraham prayed for Abimelech and was instantly healed (Gen.20:7), Moses provided manna to hungry Israelites (Ex. 16:1ff), provided water out of the rock (Num. 20:11ff), at Zarephath Elijah miraculously increased flour and oil, instead of these commodities being used up (1 Kgs. 17:9-16) and he raised the dead (1 Kgs. 17:17-12), Elisha increased oil and one jar of oil filled several jars until there was no more empty jar (2 Kgs. 4:1ff). Jesus in the New Testament is also depicted as one who performed similar miracles. Zimbabwean prophets have therefore sought to closely follow these great Old Testament prophetic figures and Jesus. Their interest is to re-live, to re-enact the biblical times. In other words, they seek to dramatise what they read in the Bible. Thus Zimbabwe has always been inundated with stories of miracle workers, who perform miracles similar to the ones these great men of

God performed, from time to time. Prophets in African Initiated Churches and traditional healers are known to perform such miracles. Followers of Prophet E.H. Gutu and wife prophetess Eunor of Zimbabwe Assemblies of God Africa Forward in Faith (ZAOGA-FIF), Andrew Wutawunashe and wife, prophetess Ruth of Family of God Church (FOG) and Matthias and Mildred of Matthias and Mildred Church have also claimed that their leaders perform such miracles. But the popularity of such individuals never reached that of Makandiwa, Vutabwashe and Angel, who attract around 45 000 followers every Sunday service. This has never happened in the history of Christianity in Zimbabwe. People flock from as far as Malawi, South Africa, Zambia, and Mozambique to be 'ministered' to by these prophets. Some suspect that Makandiwa and Angel could be playing African magic acquired from either Nigeria or Ghana where such priests are common and one from Ghana has confessed that several pastors from across the globe including from Zimbabwe flock to him to get the magic to perform such miracles as making money. The Ghanaian magician claims that he makes 'miracle money' from nowhere.

Also, that the whole Zimbabwean society could concentrate on such individuals to the extent that even politicians, technocrats, economists discussed and consulted them is unprecedented in post-colonial Zimbabwe.

Therefore, what is new is the popularity of the performers of such miracles and the rich pickings they get from these activities not the miracles. In other words, the Zimbabwean society is abuzz with talk of their miraculous exploits. The discussions range from scepticism, outright dis-missal of them as false prophets and their miracles as magic to admiration. At the centre of the arguments is the Bible. Those who dismiss them as false prophets appeal to the Bible and those who absolutely believe them as true prophets also cite the Bible. Such texts as Mark 16:17-18 which claim that 'and these signs will accompany those who believe... in my name they will drive out demons;...speak new tongues;.... they will pick snakes with hands;...will drink poison (but) it will not hurt them at all; they will place their hands on sick people and they will get well' and 1 Cor. 2:9, which says, 'No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God prepared for those who love him' have often been cited by the followers in defence of their leaders. Also quoted often is John 14:12 which has Jesus promising disciples that, 'anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will even greater things that these'.

For the followers of these prophets, these scriptures are being fulfilled in the ministries and miracles performed by Vutabwashe, Makandiwa and Angel among others. The prophets at the centre of the discussion also cite the Bible to show that they are indeed true prophets, followers of Christ. The main import of this article is to dismiss the criteria set in the Bible as not sacrosanct in dealing with such a complex phenomenon as prophecy, let alone distinguishing true and false prophets. Evidence shall be drawn especially from the Old Testament.

BACKGROUND TO THE "TRUE AND FALSE PROPHECY" DEBATE IN ANCIENT ISRAEL

The problems faced regarding the criteria to distinguish who is a true and who is a false prophet is not a modern phenomenon. It is maybe as old as the institution of prophecy itself. The Old Testament bears evidence of a society similar to our own; a society grappling with the determination of true from false prophecy. While in ancient Israel, the society was provoked by the existence of conflicting messages from people who both claimed to be prophets of God, in our contemporary society, the existence of men and women who perform 'extra-ordinary' miracles seems to spark the debate more than conflicting messages. The clashes between Elijah and the 450 prophets of Baal (and 400 prophets of Asherah) at Mt. Carmel (1Kgs 18: 16-40), that of Micaiah ben Imlah and Zedekiah (1 Kgs 22:24) and the one between Jeremiah and Hananiah (Jer. 28) are convincing evidence not only to the fact that in Israel conflicting theological convictions between prophets was the source of contradictory messages but also that this ideological clash in most cases ended up in real physical clashes/fist-fighting and death. Thus, prophetic conflict in Israel was not uncommon and the reasons for their clashes varied.

According to Robert Carroll, while prophetic conflict had been part and parcel of the Israelite society maybe from as far back as its origins, the problem became acute towards the end of the Judean Kingdom in the sixth century BCE.

As one prophet said one thing, another said the opposite. This became confusing to the society until theologians of the era took it as their responsibility to advise the society on the criteria to differentiate true and false prophets. Unfortunately, some of these theologians were interested parties in that they were prophets themselves. As such, they premised themselves as true and condemned as false whoever had a contrary theological or political ideology to theirs. While such prophets-cum theologians thought their criteria were objective and water-tight, the suggested criteria, as we look back, are very biased and can hardly solve the debate within our societies. Be that as it may, this attempt at establishing criteria of authenticity of prophets in Israel is captured in literature by Deuteronomist theologians/editors (Deut 3:1-5; 18:15-22), Jeremiah (23:9-32) and Ezekiel (13).

However, rather than solving the debate as regards to who exactly was a true prophet and who was a false one, the criteria set by the Deuteronomist theologians only provide very important insights into the dilemma that befell the society of Judah in trying to fish out false prophets from true prophets. And the same dilemma is on our societies. The criteria set by the Deuteronomists (and in the entire Bible) cannot help us solve the debate. While these criteria have been invoked as water-tight by some in our contemporary world, (in Zimbabwe in particular) in the debate relating to numerous Pentecostal preachers who are called prophets, the present article regards the criteria as having failed to really make a distinction between true and

false prophets.

CRITERIA SET IN THE BOOK OF DEUTERONOMY

The book of Deuteronomy offers maybe what could be the earliest and most comprehensive attempt by the society at establishing criteria to determine authentic and inauthentic prophets in Israel. For instance, in two separate but thematically related texts, Deuteronomy provides some criteria that have been cited over the ages as important for distinguishing true from false prophets, even in our midst. The first criterion proposed was 'speaking in the name of Yahweh'. A true prophet was to speak in the name of Yahweh. This criterion assumes that in Israel true prophets were messengers of Yahweh, hence were supposed to speak in his name. And they were supposed to invite listeners to worship Yahweh alone. Any prophet who spoke in the name of another god, or one who told the Israelite community to worship other gods beside Yahweh was to be stoned to death (Deut 13:1-5). In the contemporary world, and especially for the ordinary readers of the Bible, this criterion is clear and has the capacity to flush out false prophets from true prophets. However, the matter of determining whether a prophet is true or false is not that simple. Prophecy as a phenomenon is very complex. The main weakness of this criterion is that in ancient Israel, it only may have catered for the difference between foreign prophets and Israelite prophets. Indeed, prophets of Baal most likely spoke in the name of Baal and those of Yahweh spoke in the name of Yahweh. What this means is that the criterion did not solve the problem among Israelite prophets who all claimed to speak for Yahweh, yet they had contradictory messages. The same is true in our modern society. All individuals who claim to be prophets speak in the name of God, even though their messages some-times are contradictory. Under such circumstances, who could we call true and who is false?

THE CRITERION OF PREDICTION AND FULFILMENT

It was maybe due to the above weakness that Deuteronomists included another criterion that had to be considered also in the determination of who is false and who is true; the criterion of prediction and fulfilment (Deut 13:1-5; 18:21-22). In this sense, Deuteronomy assumes that a true prophet must speak in the name of Yahweh and the prediction must come to pass in the manner so predicted. From the point of view of the Deuteronomist theologians, the criterion of speaking in the name of Yahweh was supposed to be used simultaneously with that of prediction and fulfilment. If a prophet spoke in the name of Yahweh and predicted something which comes to pass, but goes ahead and calls upon the people to worship some other gods besides Yahweh, such a prophet was to be stoned (Deut 13:1-2). In the same manner, if he spoke in the name of Yahweh but the word was not fulfilled, such a prophet was to be regarded as a false prophet, hence was supposed to be stoned to death (Deut 13:5; 18:20). With these criteria, maybe no contemporary man or woman who claims to be prophet would be stoned. They all would be attested as true, for most of their

predictions have come to pass. But at the same time, they would all be stoned, since some of their predictions have not been fulfilled. As noted in the introduction, most (but obviously not all) of the predictions by Zimbabwean prophets for example are accurate and come to pass as predicted. In fact, in Zimbabwe, those in support of Vutabwashe, Makandiwa and Angel believe that these individuals are true prophets because their predictions have come to pass.

WEAKNESSES OF THE PREDICTION AND FULFILMENT CRITERION

Critiquing the two criteria proposed by the Deuteronomist theologians, Carroll is apt when he observed that, 'it was too oversimplified an approach to the complex matter of prophecy'.

The criteria leave a lot of issues unattended to. Firstly, the criterion of prediction and fulfilment of events only caters for prophets who make short-term predictions, such as: tomorrow you will die, you will get money, or next week or next year there will be drought, etc. But, prophets who make long-term predictions were left 'unjudged' until such a time predicted has lapsed. But some of these predictions took generations to be fulfilled, hence caused a lot of anxiety in the society (Ezek 12:27). And by the time the prediction was fulfilled, the concerned prophet may have died. What this means is that, prophets who made long-term predictions would die false prophets. In other words, they only could be taken as true prophets by later generations who would have witnessed the fulfilment of their predictions. But again, it depended on the memory of the people from one generation to another; otherwise most of the predictions of these prophets would have been forgotten.

The second weakness is that this criterion is self-contradictory. While according to these theologians, a prediction was supposed to be fulfilled maybe in the prophet's life time, some of these Deuteronomist theologians included in their history, long-term predictions; prophecies that were not to be fulfilled in the immediate future or in their life-time. For example, 1 Sam 2:31-36 predicts what is in the very distant future and not yet conceivable. 1 Kings 13:2 also indicates that the prediction was made so many years back and the society may have forgotten about it. Another incident is that found in 2 Kings 13:15-19, where Elisha made a prediction but died before the prediction was fulfilled (2 Kgs. 13:20). Thus when we use the criterion of fulfilment of prediction, Elisha died a false prophet. The same conclusion could be reached regarding Jeremiah. In Jeremiah 25:11-12 and 29:10, Jeremiah made a prediction that Judah would be released from Babylonian slavery after seventy years. Basing upon the criterion of fulfilment of prediction, Jeremiah would only be proven as a true prophet after seventy years. And by that time Jeremiah and most, if not all the people who were his audiences would have died. In short, Jeremiah, according to this criterion, died a false prophet. The criterion has thus the propensity to dismiss as false all the prophets we have always regarded as true, such as Elisha, Jeremiah, Micah and Isaiah among others. Micah (5:5) and Isaiah (10:5) for example, predicted

that Jerusalem would be destroyed by the Assyrians in the eighth century but Jerusalem was not destroyed by the Assyrians in the eighth century.

It was destroyed instead by the Babylonians in 587, in the sixth century BCE. According to this criterion, Micah and Isaiah are false prophets. A third weakness associated with the Deuteronomist theologians' criterion of prediction and fulfilment of prophecy is that it makes prediction the sole function of prophets. Of course prophets predicted and this is very pronounced in the Old Testament. In 1 Sam. 10:5 for example, Samuel predicted that Saul would come across a group of prophets, and it happened (1 Sam 10:10). In 1 Kings 11:26 Ahijah predicted the break of the kingdom and Jeroboam would be king over the northerners, Israel and it happened (1 Kgs. 12:20). Ahijah predicted that Jeroboam's ill son was going to die and it happened (1 Kgs. 14:12, 17) exactly as predicted. But equating prophecy with prediction is not always quite correct.

Prophets were first and foremost preachers, whose preaching was intended to cause change of attitude and change of action from the audience. Herbert Bess is therefore right when he observes that 'certainly the (Israelite) prophet did predict the future...but prediction (of the future) was not the larger part of prophecy; it was as much the prophet's responsibility to interpret correctly the past and the present'.

In other words, what they predicted may be offset by the change of behaviour of the people. In fact, most of the great prophets of Israel always connected their predictions of doom and gloom with hope and chance of repentance. They always wanted people to repent so as to avoid consequences which they predicted. The fourth most important weakness of the criterion of fulfilment of prediction, as implied in Deuteronomy 13:1-5 especially is that even a false prophet could by chance predict what could come to pass. In other words, there was also a great chance that a prophet regarded as genuine might on occasion be false and the so called false prophet might speak the truth (1 Kgs. 13:18).

This scenario was witnessed in many other instances in the history of Israel. A prophet regarded as true would be deceived by God to prophesy falsehoods. He, in other words, would be given a false revelation by God. 1 Kings 22 is the classic example of di-vine deception; the fact that God could lie to true prophets so as to achieve certain goals. In this case, King Ahab consulted 400 prophets on whether he has to go for war or not. They all encouraged him to go claiming that God was with the king to give him victory (1 Kgs. 22:6). Yet, the text is very clear that the 400 prophets had been lied to by God (1 Kgs. 22: 19-23). This means, had it not been the lying spirit from God that entered these prophets, they would have said the truth. In fact, it is clear that before this incident they always told the truth; they were true prophets. It also means after this incident they became false prophets or they became true prophets again. In other words, 1 Kings 22 makes a bold declaration that both a true prophet and a false prophet were mediums of the same God! What is

also coming out of this text is that prophets are not responsible for their actions and speech. Therefore, they can-not be held accountable since they are only agents in the hand of God. This defeats Deut 13:5 which stipulates the death penalty to those who prophesy falsehoods. Why would they be killed when they were truth-fully serving God by lying? The concepts of divine deception together with divine repentance pro-vide some of the most likely avenues for understanding contradictions among Israelite prophets and even prophets in our midst. While the Israelite history shows that the divine (God) could deceive his prophets, His repentance also left his messengers, the prophets in limbo. In so many instances in the Bible we are told that God repented and did not do what he had promised to do (cf. Amos 7:3,6,). Although prophets were understood or understood themselves as social and religious critics in order to bring about reform, divine repentance always left them ex-posed as false prophets. The harsh tone with which prophets reacted to their unfulfilled predictions indicates that they were afraid of being labelled false prophets since the criterion of prediction and fulfilment was in full force. For example, when the people of Nineveh repented and turned away from their sinful ways, Yahweh decided to spare them (Jo-nah 3:4). However Jonah could not have it. Jonah is prepared to die than to live because people would call him a false prophet (Jonah 4:3b).

And Jonah had suspicion already before he went to Nineveh that Yahweh would not fulfil his words (Jonah 4:1,2). This is why initially he fled to Tarshish (Jonah 1:3). The same frustration with God's deception or repentance is evident in Jeremiah 20:7-10. If we apply the criterion of fulfilment of prediction, these prophets were false prophets. Thus the criterion is weak in that it does not leave room for both the divine and the society to repent. In the light of divine deception and divine repentance, the criterion of fulfilment of prediction as a mark of true prophecy is rendered void. This becomes glaring when we consider 1 Kings 21:21-29. We encounter Elijah predicting disaster on the house of Ahab and the death of his wife Jezebel. As a way to fulfil the prediction by Elijah, in 2 Kings 9:1-13 Jehu is anointed by a son of a prophet who had been sent by prophet Elisha; that is, with divine approval. Elisha through the madman told Jehu to slaughter all the members of Ahab's family (2 Kgs 9:6), as had been predicted by Elijah earlier. And Jehu took the commission seriously and exterminated the house of Ahab as directed by the Lord (2 Kgs. 9:14-10:36). On the basis of the criterion of fulfilment of prediction, Elijah was a true prophet because his prediction was fulfilled. Yet in Hosea 1:4, a fellow Israelite prophet, Hosea is given a word by God to condemn Jehu for doing exactly what God had commanded through two great prophets, Elijah and Elisha, to massacre the house of Ahab in the Jezreel valley! Which is which? Who received the word from God? What this means is, a prophecy that was taken as true by an earlier generation may be interpreted in bad light by later generations. Or it means God changes his mind. While God thought what Ahab had done was wrong, he later felt that what he had commanded was wrong and he repented. But where does the repentance of God leave the prophets

who were just used as instruments? Who was a true prophet between Elijah, Elisha and Hosea? With this set up, all were true prophets and all were false prophets! According to Todd Hibbard, it was upon the weaknesses of the criterion of fulfilment of prediction that Jeremiah developed other supporting criteria to be considered in determining who is a true and who is a false prophet. The charges made by Jeremiah against his opponents/other prophets that he labelled false provide further criteria for distinguishing between prophets, but they are however not without their own problems. The first of such criteria is immorality, particularly sexual immorality (Jer 23:9-15). Thus, Jeremiah in Jeremiah 23:9ff but especially in Jeremiah 26-29 revised Deuteronomy 13:1-5 and Deuteronomy 18:18-20 which emphasise the criterion of fulfilment of prediction as sine qua non of prophecy.

For Jeremiah, moral uprightness is to be considered as well.

THE CRITERION OF MORALITY

It is generally assumed that moral uprightness was expected of prophets if they had to be considered authentic in the Israelite society. Although it is not known exactly how prevalent this practice of sexual immorality was among prophets, the accusation is a strong one suggesting that this may have been a real cause for concern. According to Jeremiah any prophet who is immoral is a false one. True prophets must be morally upright. And this has influenced the way we judge men and women in our midst who claim to be messengers of God. Anyone who commits adultery or fornication is dismissed as a false prophet. And anything he or she says is not taken seriously. In Zimbabwe for instance, former Archbishop for Bulawayo diocese, Pius Ncube commanded great respect as a prophet of God until in 2007 when he was captured on surveillance camera committing adultery with a number of women. Since then, the Zimbabwean society generally does not regard him as a man of God anymore. Be that as it may, the criterion can be dismissed as weak on the following grounds. First, we have prophets in the Israelite society who lived morally questionable lives; yet they are called true prophets and their words were revered. Hosea, for instance married a prostitute called Gomer, the daughter of Diblaim (Hos. 1:2,3). And it is explicit in the Bible that she was a prostitute, an adulterous woman. Therefore, by marrying Gomer, Hosea committed an immoral act before the Lord. It is not indicated in the Bible whether she stopped her immoral ways after marriage or not. But taking cue from the divorce and remarriage (Hos. 2-3), she continued her trade even after marriage. This suggests that Hosea lived an adulterous life. Yet, he was called a true prophet. Although it is possible that sexual immorality was not understood in the ancient Israelite society in the same way as we do today, Hosea's marriage to Gomer, a prostitute (Hos. 1-3) would have been condemned as immoral by his society (cf. Deut. 24: 2-4). Thus, with this criterion, Ho-sea is a false prophet, yet all of the readers of the Bible regard him as a true prophet. Actually modern preachers often refer to his book and even to the marriage itself as a very great lesson! In the same way, according to this criterion, Isaiah's sexual relations with a

prophetess (Isa. 8:1-3) would have been condemned.

Of course there are scholars who presume that this prophetess was his wife, but there is no indication in the Bible that Isaiah was married to this woman he had sexual relations with. It is possible that she was just a prophetess, whether she was married or not we do not know. The matter becomes worse if she was married. That means, Isaiah would have committed adultery. Second, on the basis of this criterion, Isaiah can be regarded as false prophet because he walked naked for three years (Isa. 20:3). Although he was dramatising the message of Yahweh, nakedness was considered an immoral act unless one was mad. Besides, it was a shameful thing to be naked throughout the biblical period (Gen. 3:7; 9:20ff; Rev. 3:18). Also, Elisha's cursing of the children was a horrendous act that resulted in the death of forty-two of them (2 Kgs 2:23-24). This constitutes a very immoral act that can be equated to terrorist acts. More so, the activities of Elijah and Elisha qualify them as mercenaries, yet they are not regarded as false prophets. They were associated more with bloodshed than life preservation. They caused various bloodbaths in Israel (1 Kgs 18:40; 2 Kgs 1:9-12; 9:10) to the extent that even later generations of prophets condemned their acts (Hos. 1:4). Surely men of God should have been known for good than for massacres! Without realising the weaknesses of his criterion of moral upright-ness, Jeremiah goes further to set other subsidiary criteria of morality that he thought could be used to differentiate true from false prophets. According to him, since they were immoral, false prophets lie, deceive people and steal oracles (Jer. 23:23-32) from true prophets; those prophets who have been in God's council. Basically, specific elements in the charge were criticisms of the techniques used to receive oracles by these prophets. They are accused of using dreams and borrowing or stealing each other's oracles. After stealing oracles, they would only appeal to the messenger formula that was common with true prophets, 'Thus says Yahweh....'(Jer. 23:31), as if they were sent by God. Although this criterion is quite attractive, it is fraught with weaknesses. In fact, all the criteria set forth in Jer. 23:9-32 still leave a lot to be desired. For example, while Jeremiah positions himself as morally upright, he can himself be dismissed as false. In Jer. 38:24-27, he lied to protect King Zedekiah. Various other prophets still would fall by the way side. Micaiah ben Imlah also deceived King Ahab that he was going to win so he should go up and put up a fight with Syria (1 Kgs. 22:16). He only could tell the truth after some pestering; otherwise he was prepared to lie so as to speak the same word with other prophets. He had heeded advice from King Ahab's messenger who told him not to speak against the word of other prophets that the king had consulted earlier. With this same criterion, Elisha would be dismissed for using deception against Ben-Hadad (2 Kgs. 8:7-15).

After all, the accusation that other prophets of Jeremiah's era were preaching lies and deceit would only make sense if they deliberately chose to lie and deceive people. Yet, it is clear from other biblical texts (Ezek 13; 14:1-11; Deut. 13:3) that these people may have been honestly preaching what they without any doubt

considered to be truth. In other words, their visions may have been false, but without realising it them-selves or without them intentionally designing to preach falsehoods.

As we noted above with the 1 Kings 22 incident, a true prophet could be deceived by God to lie. According to Carroll, now if Yahweh used the false prophets or the idolaters to deceive community and individuals, or if he tested the community by false dreamers or prophets as is clear in Deut 13:3, in what way were Jeremiah and Ezekiel right to claim that Yahweh had not sent the prophets who proclaimed such false visions (Jer. 23:21; Ezek. 13:6)?

Indeed these prophets were sent by Yahweh. In fact, it could be Jeremiah and Ezekiel who are liars. Their belief that these prophets were not sent by Yahweh is a lie because as a matter of fact these prophets were sent by Yahweh. Further, Jeremiah's attack on the use of dreams (Jer. 23:25-28) and the use of other prophets' oracles (Jer. 23:30) is very problematic. The Bible has plenty of places where dreams are regarded as a legitimate way of receiving oracles or inspiration from Yahweh. In other words, Yahweh in the history of ancient Israel has on various occasions communicated his will through dreams, (Gen 28:12-17; 40-41), (1 Kings 3:5-15), Joel (2:28) and Daniel. Even in Deut 13:1,3 there is an implication that dreams were a formal way of receiving revelation from God. The same high regard for dreams as a method in which the divine communicated to people existed across the ancient Near East especially in Egypt, to the extent that what Joseph did in Genesis 40-41 by interpreting dreams was not unknown.

The same is true in the New Testament. Dreams are not condemned. They are a legitimate way of receiving inspiration from the divine world (Heb. 3:1).

To therefore claim that receiving messages through dreams is a mark of being a false prophet is misplaced.

Jeremiah's accusation that false prophets steal oracles from other prophets actually backfires. On the basis of this criterion, even Jeremiah himself would be dismissed as a false prophet and a lot more prophets that we regard as true, such as Isaiah, Micah, Amos and Joel, because these prophets have some of their oracles that are identical, betraying the fact that they were 'stolen' from one another. For instance, Isa. 2:2-4 and Micah 4:1-3 are basically one and the same oracle given by two different prophets apparently in the same context.

According to the criterion of Jeremiah, one prophet stole from another. So either Isaiah was a false prophet or Micah, or even both were false prophets. The same could be said about Amos 1:2; Jer. 25:30 and Joel 3:16 which all use the same expression. These shared elements can also be found in Isa. 10:27b-32 and Micah 1:10-15; Isa. 5:8-10 and Micah 2:1-3, Jer. 49:7-22 and Obad. 1-9. So shall we dismiss these as false prophets? If we are to apply this criterion, Jeremiah himself would be dismissed. For, in Jeremiah 26:17-18, Micah 3:12 is cited almost verbatim,

something that is very unusual. This has prompted Hibbard to conclude that, 'this is the only instance of a prophetic book quoting from another by name any-where in the Hebrew Bible'.