

***Elele nje usathetha: Ukukhapha* as an expression of amaXhosa language
world-sense**

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BY

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DECLARATION

I, Zikho Dana, hereby declare that this thesis is my own original work and has not, in its entirety or part, been submitted at any other university for a degree:

Signed:

Date:

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KuMdali wethu, the Creator, all glory belongs to you.

To izinyanya, izihlwele zakuthi (my spiritual entourage), ooMkhiwa, ooNxasana, ooTotoba, ooNtam' enemidanda okwenkuz'enkomo, ooMalilelwa ziintombi zithi 'bhuti ndizeke nokuba awunankomo', ooBhili kaYoyo, ooSkhonza nakuMabongwe, ooMbuyisa, ooNdima, ooMvum'nyama, ooSondisa, ooMathobela, ndiyabulela ngokundithwala maxa onke nokuba sisikhumbuzo sokuba andihambi ndedwa. Camagu, makudede ubumnyama kuvele ukukhanya nemali eninzi!

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DEDICATION

**To my mother, Nonkonzo Dana (nee Nosipho Mguli) and My siblings Yokotwa, Lula
and Duma Dana**

Abstract

This study examines *ukukhapha* as an expression of amaXhosa language world-sense. Firstly, it examines how *ukukhapha* as a rite of passage to accompany the spirit of the deceased from the physical realm into the spiritual realm maintains the nexus between the living and the dead. Secondly, it explores *ukukhapha* as a ritual of collective mourning. Both dimensions of the study are pursued using language as a point of departure. This study draws on four key texts written across different times in history, namely: *Intlalo kaXhosa (The Social Life of amaXhosa)* by Tiyo Burnside (TB) Soga (1974); the three volume *Greater Dictionary of isiXhosa* (1989, 2003 and 2006); Nokuzola Mndende's (2002) PhD thesis entitled: *Signifying practices: AmaXhosa ritual speech*; and Khaya Dlanga's (2015) memoir: *To Quote Myself*. This thesis examines *ukukhapha* in the context of death to establish how amaXhosa speak about death and how this shapes their understanding and its practice. Discourse analysis is employed to clarify some practices and examples of *ukukhapha*. It's also used to trace the evolution of *ukukhapha* over time in isiXhosa. It is utilized as a reservoir of knowledge epitomizing the world-sense of amaXhosa rather than solely as a means of communication. This study reveals that while *ukukhapha* as a ritual slaughtering of an ox to accompany the deceased is found in literature, its examination as a practice of communal and collective grief is scanty. The four key texts studied in this thesis reveal that *ukukhapha* goes beyond a mere ritual slaughtering of a sacrificial beast to accompany the spirit of the deceased to the ancestral realm. It is a practice that has allowed amaXhosa to collectively grieve. Furthermore, it has provided the bereaved various forms of support which are pivotal in maintaining and strengthening kinship and communal ties among the living. This study further reveals that for the Africans in general, and for amaXhosa in particular, death is not the end of life. It is a continuation of life where the deceased morphs and graduates to an ancestor who joins a larger community of ancestors who act as intermediaries between the living and *uMdali*, the Creator. The findings demonstrate that through *ukukhapha*, there is no bifurcation between gender and age, rather they complement each other as the successful execution of the mourning period and farewell of a loved one is dependent on the roles played by both women and men respectively.

Isishwankathelo

Olu phando luceba ukuphonononga ukukhapha njengendlela yokuphila equlathwe kulwimi lwamaXhosa. Okokuqala, luzakuphanda indlela ukukhapha njengesiko lokukhapha umphefumlo womfi ukusukela kwelenyama ukuya kwelemimoya kugcina ngayo ubudlelwane phakathi kwabaphilayo nabaleli ukuthula. Okwesibini, luzakuphanda ukukhapha njengesiko lokuzila ndawoni nye. Zombini ezi nkalo zizakuvelelwa ngokugxila kulwimi. Olu phando lucaphula kwimibhalo emine engundoqo kumaxesha ohlukileyo kwimbali, iquka: *Intlalo kaXhosa* owabhalwa nguTiyo Burnside Soga (ngowe1974); isichazi-magama esinemiqulu emithathu i*The Greater Dictionary of isiXhosa* (ngowama-1989, owama-2003 nowama-2006); ithisisi yePhD kaNokuzola Mndende (ngowama-2002) ebizwa *Signifying practices: amaXhosa ritual speech*; nencwadi engunomalisa wobom, ebhalwe nguKhaya Dlanga (ngowama-2015) ebizwa *To Quote Myself*. Le thisisi isebenzisa ukukhapha kwilixa lokufa ukuphanda indlela amaXhosa athetha ngkufa, nokuba le ndlela yokuthetha iyichaphazela njani indlela abakuqonda ngayo ukufa nendlela abakhaphana ngayo. IDiscourse Analysis isetyenziswa njengesixhobo sokucacisa ukukhapha. Iphinde isetyenziswe ukunika imizekelo yeli siko nendlela yokuphila kwakunye nendlela ukukhapha kutshintshe ngayo ekuhambeni kwexesha kulwimi lwesiXhosa njengokuba sizakusetyenziswa njengovimba wolwazi, endaweni yokusetyenziswa njengesixhobo sonxibelelwano kuphela. Olu phando lubonisa ukuba njengokuba ukukhapha njengesiko lokuphalaza igazi lenkomo ukukhapha umfi kubhaliwe ngako kuncwadi, indlela abaphilayo enyameni abakhaphana ngayo iyasilela kuncwadi. Le mibhalo mine echongiweyo nephononongiweyo kolu phando ivelisa ukuba ukukhapha akuphelelanga ekuphalazeni igazi lenkomo kuphela njengesiko lokukhapha umfi ukuze awelele kweleminyanya, yindlela eyavumela amaXhosa ukuba azile ngemanyano apho uluntu luxhasa abafelweyo ngeendlela ezahlukeneyo ezithi zomeleze imanyano phakathi kwabazalanayo noluntu lwabaphilayo. Olu phando lutyhila into yokuba kumaAfrika jikelele, ingakumbi amaXhosa, ukufa ayikuko ukuphela kobom, nto nje luhambo olugqithisa umfi kubom obulandelayo apho ongeza kwinani kwelezinyanya apho izinyanya zilikhonco phakathi koMdali nabaphilayo. Iziphumo ngokukhapha zibonisa ukuba akukho ukuchasana phakathi kwesini neminyaka, nto nje, le miba mibini iyathungelana ekuncediseni nasekuqinisekiseni ukuba abafazi namadoda benza iindima zabo ngokufanelekileyo ekuqinisekiseni ukuba ixesha lezila nokubeka umfi kwikhaya lakhe lokugqibela ziyimpumelelo.

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Chapter One

General background of the study

Introduction

This study examines how *ukukhapha*, which recognizes the important role played by the living and dead in black people's cosmology, is an everyday expression of their world-sense. The study unpacks how amaXhosa speak about death. It further explores their practice of *ukukhapha* in relation to death. The term *ukukhapha* is interrogated, together with other expressions used in its context as a source of knowledge by amaXhosa. Studying language is essential in understanding and decoding people's thoughts and experiences (Maseko, 2019:01). As Oyěwùmí (1997:28) also argues, "language carries with it the world-sense of a people". This resonates with the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, which propounds that one's thoughts and actions are intertwined with their language (Kay and Kempton, 1984:66).

Ukukhapha is practiced in virtually all the seasons of amaXhosa life that is affiliated to rites of passage, marriage, and death. As Bongela (2018) argues, in everyday life among amaXhosa, one is either accompanying or being accompanied when she recalls:

...in my childhood, one would never go to someone's house alone. One always asked someone to *khapha* you, so that one always had a witness, another's humanity to rub up against one's own. A visitor would never visit by themselves.

In the context of death, Mbiti (1969:150), Soga (1974), Solomon (1980:22), Bongela (2001:53), van Heerden (2002), Yawa (2010) and Bogopa (2020) define *ukukhapha* as a ritual performed for the deceased to "accompany" him or her into the spiritual realm through slaughtering an animal which "transports" his spirit into this world. According to the *Greater Dictionary of isiXhosa* (1989:742), van Heerden (2002), Diniso (2017:94), Tshoba (2014:23), Yawa (2010) as well as Martin, van Wijk, Hans-Arendse and Makhaba (2013:54), *ukukhapha* is practiced to bring back (*ukubuyiswa*) the deceased's spirit as an ancestor to protect and bless the living family members. The practice recognizes the importance of co-existence between the living and the dead in amaXhosa world-sense. Oyěwùmí (1997:3) argues that world-sense refers to "cultures that may privilege senses other than the visible or even a combination of senses". It is against this backdrop that this study refers to world-sense as a theoretical framework to understand amaXhosa, using isiXhosa, their language as a source of knowledge. Moreover, this study uses the term *world-sense* instead of worldview which privileges the visible over other senses (Oyěwùmí, 1997). More of the world-sense in conjunction with the

Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis (SWH) as theoretical frameworks will be discussed in detail in Chapter Three with the intention of illuminating the nexus between language and society, which places this study within the Sociolinguistics discipline of African languages.

This study explores how language facilitates the performance of rituals and collective support during death which maintains the relationship between the living and what theologian John Mbiti (1969) refers to as the living-dead or the ancestors. The world-sense of amaXhosa maintains that death is not an extermination of life but it is a continuation of it in a different realm. Baloyi and Makobe-Rabothata (2013:01) like Mokhutso (2019:24) maintain that “African epistemology views death as a transition from the visible to the invisible ontology where the spirit, the essence of the person is not destroyed but moves to live in the spirit ancestors’ realm.” In the African cosmology, death is, therefore, not viewed as the end of life, but merely morphing and a graduation to another life stage - a transition into the spiritual realm. Ngubane (2004:173) explains that, “the African belief and philosophy concerns itself that there is life after death and the forefathers’ wisdom has always stressed a continuous interaction between humankind and it’s life context.” The belief that even death does not destroy life is what Africans, including amaXhosa hold unto dearly as it affirms that the physical realm is not a state of permanence but rather another life stage which leads into the final life stage of the spiritual realm.

Julius Malema, leader of the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF), demonstrated this world-sense at the funeral of the national liberation stalwart Mam’ Winnie Madikizela-Mandela, by addressing her as if she was still alive. He appealed to her through his remark, “Mama give us a signal” (Eyewitness News, 2018). Mndende (2002:21) explains that “from the time of conception until death, individuals within African Traditional Religion and culture are engaged in actively maintaining close contact with the spiritual world, that is the world of their ancestors and *Qamata* (Creator).”The interdependence between the living and the ancestors strikes a balance between the physical and spirit worlds and is maintained through various rituals and *ukuthetha* (ritual speech). Ngubane (2004:173) posits that, “the ancestors are seen as part of reality for African people and occupy the center stage.”

This study focuses on four key texts that were written in three different times in history. It traces the evolution of *ukukhapha* during death to understand the different ways in which death and mourning occur and the changes thereafter. AmaXhosa as will be discovered in this study, are a heterogenous group of people who speak a variety of isiXhosa vernaculars and use

different terms to refer to *ukukhapha* during death such as *inkomo yenzila* (Soga, 1974:122), *idini lokukhapha* (GDX, 1989:742), *ukukhapha* (GDX, 2003:50). The practice of *ukukhapha* during death differs and is complementary between amaXhosa women and men, respectively. These differences and collaborations in the rite of passage and practice of *ukukhapha* during death for both women and men complement each other. These differences and collaborations are forever undergoing changes which reveal that *ukukhapha* during death does not separate people based on gender and seniority. Essentially, this study shows that *ukukhapha* during death transcends the rite of passage which is marked by the slaughtering of a sacrificial beast. It also entails the important aspect of maintaining and strengthening familial and communal ties. Equally so, this is illustrated in isiXhosa. Therefore, this study relies on linguistic evidence embedded in isiXhosa to define and explain *ukukhapha* during mourning and how it shapes amaXhosa's understanding and response to death.

1.1 Locating amaXhosa

AmaXhosa are not a homogenous group of people, but they share several commonalities, including language (isiXhosa) and their rituals. However, their rituals may differ on how and when they are performed. They (amaXhosa) are a Nguni group, together with amaZulu, amaNdebele and amaSwati, located in South Africa and in other Southern African countries. There are various groups within amaXhosa who are known as amaBhaca, amaMfengu, amaMpondo, amaMpondomise, abaThembu, amaHlubi and other groups who share several linguistic and cultural similarities with amaXhosa and are reluctant to accept this identity (Mndende 2002). These are some of the isiXhosa speaking people's preferred groupings and identities instead of the 'new' national identities which date back to 28 years after the liberation or post-colonial period in South Africa. This implies that the term amaXhosa is used as an umbrella which includes these different groupings of people who speak a variety of isiXhosa vernaculars. It is against this backdrop that Tisani (1994:03) argues that "the impact of the colonial order and Christian teachings have left an imprint on the political outlook of amaXhosa". There are also amaXhosa *aseZimbabwe* (amaXhosa in Zimbabwe) (Kunju, 2017), but that group is excluded from this study. Furthermore, this study does not dwell on the Ndlambe, Ngqika, Rharhabe and Gcaleka identities within amaXhosa. What is common among this group is that they, "perceive themselves as descendants of *Ntu*. Phrases like *lusapho lukaNtu*- family of *Ntu* and *zinto zikaNtu*- descendants of *Ntu*- are phrases amaXhosa use to refer to themselves" explains Tisani (1994:03-04). Tisani (1994:04) goes on to argue that "linguists classify isiXhosa as belonging to the *siNtu* language family. Geographically isiXhosa

is the southernmost of the various *siNtu* languages that are scattered over the African continent”. According to Statistics South Africa (StatsSA, 2018) as the second largest ethnic group after AmaZulu (22.7%), 16% of the South African population are amaXhosa, with amaNdebele at 2.1% and amaSwati at 2.5%.

Additionally, there is a commonly held myth that the term “*Xhosa*” originates from the encounter between the Khoi, the San communities and amaXhosa. Upon this encounter, the former referred to the latter as ‘angry men’. The term *Kosa* in the Khoi and San languages was translated as ‘angry men’. One unpopular myth about the origin of amaXhosa as reported by Tisani (1994:05) is that:

amaXhosa are the descendants of a girl, Nomagwayi, who went out with *ingqina*-hunting party. During her absence from home, she fell pregnant and because of scandal, the hunting party dreaded returning home. They settled in the new territory and founded amaXhosa. This word came from *ixhontsa*, a name for hunting dogs.

The term *isiXhosa* which has the click ‘x’ is evidence that amaXhosa integrated their language with the Khoi and San clicks hence the ‘x’ in *isiXhosa* and amaXhosa (Tisani 1994:05). What this mean is that the intermingling between African communities led to a combination of ruptures and continuities in culture, customs, foods, dress code as well as the overall conduct which is mitigated through languages making up the bulk of these devices which contemporary people claim as their heritage. Tisani (1994:05) further asserts that “there is no agreement among scholars about the territory than can be defined as belonging to amaXhosa”. Various landmarks are used to demarcate and trace the beginning and ending of the borders of amaXhosa territory such as the Mbashe river, Maxelexwa (Gamtoos), iNxuba (Fish River) which indicate that the “Xhosa sphere of influence was forever in a state of flux” explains Tisani (1994:06).

This study generically uses the term *amaXhosa* to describe *isiXhosa* speaking people regardless of the numerous subgroups within their linguistic community. This term is used in an “all embracing sense” (Mtuzze, 2004:04). To further explain this point, Mtuzze (2004:04) posits that “more general use of the term is with reference to all *isiXhosa* speaking people, including those who speak what are generally and sometimes erroneously referred to as *isiXhosa* dialects”. This therefore mean that this study refers to the standardized version of *isiXhosa*, which is used in popular, published *isiXhosa* literature, known as *isiRharhabe* (named after King Rharhabe of amaRharhabe). The First Chapter lays a foundation for the conceptual framework which locates research questions for this study.

These key texts are the three volumes; *The Greater Dictionary of isiXhosa* which will serve as an encyclopedic text made up of Volume Three (1989), Volume Two (2003) and Volume One (2006). Additionally, the cultural essays in Volume Three act as supplementary information to explain *ukukhapha* and the other terms (and the processes) relevant to the ritual and practice during death. Tiyo (TB) Soga's (1974) *Intlalo kaXhosa* provides a reading of traditional amaXhosa culture and its encounter with both Christianity and capitalism. This is followed by Nokuzola Mndende's (2002) PhD dissertation entitled *Signifying Practices: AmaXhosa Ritual Speech*, a text focusing on the practices of African Traditional Religion and *ukuthetha* (ritual speech), as well as the marketing and media personality, Khaya Dlanga's (2015) *To Quote Myself* respectively.

1.1.1 Ukukhapha beyond ritual slaughtering

It is worth noting that *ukukhapha* has been studied within the confines of the ritual of slaughtering an ox as a rite of passage for the head of the household who is a man. This Chapter maintains that *ukukhapha* during death has been understudied, particularly the interactions between the living, which inter alia entail moral and practical support that family and community members provide to the bereaved. This study investigates *ukukhapha* during death and how amaXhosa make sense of death through their language and daily interactions with both the living and the dead (living-dead).

Chapter One of this study encapsulates the definition and practice of *ukukhapha* during death, which is two-fold. Firstly, the study focuses on the ritual speech and slaughtering of a beast (usually an ox) to accompany the spirit of the deceased into the spiritual realm where they will become an ancestor, joining a community of ancestors who will act as a link between the living and *uMdlali/uQamata/Creator* or *uThixo* (God) (Mtuzi, 1999:23; Mndende, 2002:23). Secondly, it examines *ukukhapha* as a ritual of collective mourning. Both dimensions of the study are pursued using language as the point of departure. It is against this backdrop that the findings in this study illuminate the ways in which different generations of amaXhosa have written about *ukukhapha* during death in relation to the expressions embedded in it through four key selected texts.

When an individual dies Africans, particularly amaXhosa, believe that she/he becomes an ancestor. Ebewo (2015:245), (Mbiti, 1969:150) also maintain that death for the African is viewed as a transition from the physical world to the spiritual world, where ancestors can keep contact with the living. AmaXhosa hardly mention the word death when one dies, they say

ugodukile (returned home), *uhambile* (gone away) or *utshonile* (gone down), observes Ebewo (2012:246). Solomon (1986:26) explains that by using euphemisms such as *ugodukile*, *utshonile*, *uhambile*, it is the same “as the sun goes(ing) down at sunset and rises again in the morning.” This, she says is the same as death emulating and symbolizing a new life, where the dead will rise and live as ancestors (Solomon, 1986:36). By emulating the rising and setting of the sun, we can see that the world-sense of amaXhosa is one that disregards death as an extermination of life. This demonstrates that for amaXhosa, there is life beyond the grave (Solomon, 1986:36).

According to Ngubane (2004:171), dying among amaZulu means returning to where one had come from, as it is expressed as *ukugoduka* (returning home), *ukuya koobabomkhulu* (returning to the forefathers), *ukudlula* (transcendence), *ukuya kwelamathongo* (return to the ancestors). Edward (2011:338) explains that amaZulu refer to the burial of an ordinary person as *ukufihlwa* (to hide) while the burial of a member of a royal family is referred to as *ukutshalwa* (to plant). This is significant as death for amaZulu (like the other Africans in general) “signifies the beginning of a new life as an ancestor who will always be present in guiding the living.” According to Solomon (1986:36), “death is the physical separation of the individual from other human beings.” Mokhutso (2019:25) shares the same sentiment as he argues that “Africans do not conceive death and life as two separate phases; instead, there is a harmonious and interdependent coexistence between the two life forces”. This is to suggest that there is life after death, and even in death, there are gains for both the living and the departed respectively. The living gain a new ancestor while the ancestors also gain an additional member to their community. Mndende (2002:114) explains that “in African Traditional Religion (ATR), death is regarded as a transitional stage before one can join the departed and enter the world of the ancestors.” Death is a passage between the physical and spiritual realm which one must pass through to move from one realm into the next.

As will be shown throughout this study, *ukukhapha* facilitates the transition between death and becoming an ancestor. It is critical to clarify that death is a painful period for amaXhosa as it is met with mourning and tears. Through this study, it is revealed and emphasized that according to the world-sense of amaXhosa, death is not a permanent severing of ties between the living and the deceased, but rather a continuation of this connection. This is different from the western notions of death which expect an individual to cut off their ties with the deceased for them to move on with their lives or as a sign of recovery from death, after having undergone several grief stages (Nwoye, 2005). This is not the case for Africans because

the ancestors act as their moral guides. Ancestors can bless the living for acting and behaving in a manner that appeases them; love, respect, harmony and observing rituals (among other things); or withhold their blessings when the living stray or live contrary to their moral codes of conduct, values, and principles (Mbiti, 1969:83; Mndende, 2002:119). Moreover, this study advances that for amaXhosa, like the other Africans in general, death and mourning are a communal affair, instead of an individual affair as is the norm in the West (Nwoye, 2005:147).

This study accentuates amaXhosa's understanding of death which is embedded in their language. This view is connected to the argument advanced by the Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis (SWH) which states that language shapes and influences a people's perception of the world and thus, illuminates *ukukhapha* which is an everyday expression of amaXhosa world-sense (Kempton and Kay, 1984). This Chapter reveals that when it comes to amaXhosa's experiences of death, much attention has been paid to landmark deaths such as the Nongqawuse Cattle Killing of 1856- 1875, the Bulhoek Massacre, apartheid regime killings, HIV/AIDS deaths and other viruses such as Tuberculosis, Cholera etc.. There has not been much focus on the processes that are set in motion by death and the interactions the living have with each other as they come to understand death and come to terms with the changes that come with death. This Chapter therefore maintains that sufficient attention on the daily interactions between amaXhosa in the event of death and the mourning period is scanty, such as the communal support the community provides to the bereaved and how they continue to shape their understanding of death and mourning. Furthermore, this Chapter builds a theoretical foundation to locate the research questions within this study which provides a nuanced understanding of *ukukhapha* during death and how amaXhosa women and men practice it.

1.2 Ukukhapha as communal/collective grieving

The mourning period dictates that the bereaved seclude themselves from social activities. This entails that they isolate themselves in their homes and as support, some family and community members would step in to assist the bereaved. This is a period marked by silence and 'appropriate behavior' for the bereaved and the mourners (Guzana, 2011:79). Guzana (2011:79) explains that "in Xhosa tradition when a family is bereaved, quietness is expected to prevail and is only broken by relevant messages concerning the death". This will be discussed elaborately in Chapters Four and Five with regards to the widow's conduct while mourning the death of her husband. Essentially, some of the family and community members would move in temporary to prevent her from the feeling of loneliness and despair that comes with death - this will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Four. Drawing from Makgahlela, Sodi, Nkoana and

Mokwena (2019:97)'s study on bereavement rituals among the Northern Sotho community of South Africa, this study reveals that just like the Northern Sotho, amaXhosa also use bereavement rituals, particularly *ukukhapha* during death to "serve a therapeutic function that facilitates the expression and management of bereavement-related psychological pain, shock, worry, and fear". People gather at the home of the deceased or the place where the funeral will be conducted to provide emotional and practical support for the bereaved (Nembahe, 1998:63). An interviewee in Nembahe's (1998:63) research reiterates that when death struck in her family, she was shocked and confused; it was the help and support of family members that she relied on for making the necessary arrangements. Similarly, one of Baars (2016:69) interviewees remarked that daily prayer meetings and singing of hymns made the reality of death more bearable and, as a result, on the day of the funeral, the pain felt was slowly getting familiar and easier to handle. Edwards (2011:339) explains that this communal support is also familiar among amaZulu as conveyed in idioms such as "*izandla ziyagezana* (i.e., one hand washes the other), and *kuhlonishwa kabili* (i.e., respect is mutual and should be reciprocated)." Karlstrom (2004:599) claims that practices such as *ukukhapha* serve to "maintain social linkages across space, particularly linkages between urban and rural populations of the sort that have proven to be resilient in much of Africa."

In essence, the role played by family and community members through various forms of support, be it spiritual, practical, financial, or social is at the core of this study. It facilitates the transition of the living from mourning to a post-mourning life where the death of their loved one(s) has become relatively more bearable and familiar. Reasons for this support among others is best explained by Mbiti (1969:149) who maintains that "death is something that concerns everybody, partly because sooner or later everyone personally faces it and partly because it brings loss and sorrow to every family and community." Death has a way of bringing people together which allows them in their respective roles to come to terms with the reality of their mortality and the importance of being with people, in good and bad times as an act of solidarity and affirmation of ubuntu and its principles which guide their existence. Nkosi, Kugara and Matshidze (2019:87) explain that the family, relatives, close friends, and community's involvement in the mourning process is pivotal because they had a close relationship with the deceased. What emerges from these interactions are concepts such as intersubjectivity, humanization, mutuality, socialization which are expressed in people's daily interactions with each other, in good and bad times (Edwards 2011:339). It is common among Africans to ensure that the bereaved and even the sick and dying are not alone in such times and this is not unique

to amaXhosa. Mbiti (1969:149-150) explains that for amaNdebele, “when a person falls seriously ill, relatives watch by his bedside.” This helps alleviate some of the weight they must carry during these difficult times. More of this will be discussed in Chapter Four.

1.3 *Ukukhapha* as ancestral send-off

According to Bogopa (2020:189) “...*ukukhapha* ritual ceremony is performed to send off the spirit of the deceased.” According to the *Greater Dictionary of isiXhosa* (1989:742), van Heerden (2002), Diniso (2017:94), Tshoba (2014:23), Yawa (2010) and Martin, van Wijk, Hans-Arendse as well as Makhaba (2013:54), *ukukhapha* is practiced so that the deceased’s spirit can be brought back (*ukubuyiswa*) as an ancestor to protect and bless the living family members. Equally important, *ukukhapha* is a rite of passage which assists the deceased to morph and transcend from the physical world to the spiritual realm where she/he will be a part of a larger group of ancestors who are from her/his clan. This is done through the slaughtering of a sacrificial beast. Lee (2012:204) observes that, “in Xhosa cosmology, the ‘proper’ ritual shedding of blood at death, as for example performed through animal sacrifice prior to the funeral service, can help to ensure a dead person’s spirit is safely led to the realm of the ancestors.” According to Makgahlela *et al* (2019:91), “bereavement rituals offer people ways to express their grief and they also provide ways for the community to support the bereaved”. This is when an ox or a goat or sheep is slaughtered (depending on the deceased’s age and social position in the family and society) to accompany her/him into the last journey of her/his life. Mndende (2002:82) explains that “during the ritual, slaughtering the animal becomes the medium of communication between the physical and spiritual world.” This will be explained in detail in Chapter Four where the role of the sacrificial beast known as *iqegu* will be delved into.

Makgahlela *et al* (2019:91) explain that, “rituals and burial rites provide a set of directions that help structure the time surrounding death.” These rituals are a way to shape people’s conduct when faced with death and that is why *ukukhapha* during death is an integral process in understanding amaXhosa’s understanding of death and how they speak about it. Makgahlela *et al* (2019:91) elaborate further by stating that, “by the same token, rituals have cognitive functions that help to mediate the experience of grief”. In the same breath, the practical and moral support provided to the bereaved is the heartbeat of the successful execution of the ritual of *ukukhapha*, during the mourning period, after the mourning period and at the burial.

Diniso (2017:94) states that the type of animal slaughtered for the *ukukhapha* ritual is dependent on the position the deceased held. As a result, a cow will be slaughtered for an 'important person' while a goat will be slaughtered for 'others' but this has to be a goat without any blemish. Furthermore, Diniso (2017:93) maintains that *ukukhapha* was only performed for the male head of the family. Among amaNdebele, Mbiti (1969:150) reports that, "the party now returns home where an animal is killed, known as 'the beast to accompany (the deceased)'. According to Mbiti (1969:150) an ox is slaughtered for the man and a goat for the woman. Nembahe (1998:65) ascertains that, "currently the slaughtering of a beast has developed into a standard procedure to the extent that even those who are poor will go out of their way to raise money for buying a cow at the time of the funeral." This will be elaborately discussed in Chapter Five of this study.

Makgahlela *et al* (2019:93) claim that, "bereavement rituals are ever changing and will continue being experienced and perceived differently over time." This is to say that *ukukhapha* like most mourning rituals and rites of practice is subject to certain changes in response to the changes experienced by the people who perform them. Evidence of these changes will be illuminated in the following Chapters and the contexts in which these changes emanate from will also be explained accordingly.

1.4 Problem Statement

Death for amaXhosa has been presented in a pathological manner throughout history, it has been preoccupied with the reasons for their death such as colonialism wars of dispossession, natural disasters and diseases to mention a few. It is seldom that the interactions and understandings that these people have with death is brought into the centre stage. This study seeks to allocate the interactions between the living and ancestors for amaXhosa during death and how this is fixed into their language which shapes their thoughts and ideas. Equally so, this will then enable the study to explicate the responses amaXhosa have towards death in relation to how the living interact with each other during this time.

1.5 Research objectives

This study is two-fold. It seeks to examine *ukukhapha* during death in conjunction with other terms associated with it which are practices set in motion by death as an expression of amaXhosa language world-sense. It firstly examines how *ukukhapha* maintains the nexus between the living and the dead. It subsequently examines *ukukhapha* as a ritual of

collective mourning. Both dimensions of the study are pursued using language as a point of departure.

Sub-questions of this study include:

- How does *ukukhapha* shape the ways amaXhosa speak about death?
- How do amaXhosa women and men practice *ukukhapha* during death?

1.6 Methodology: a “turn to language”

This study deploys discourse analysis as its methodology. Gill (2000:172) explains that, “discourse analysis is the name given to a variety of different approaches to study texts, which have developed from different theoretical traditions and diverse disciplinary locations.” It is through discourse analysis that this study employs different texts to explain *ukukhapha* and how pivotal it is to amaXhosa during the mourning process with isiXhosa as a point of reference. Put simply, discourse analysis goes beyond a mere reliance on language as a mode of communication - rather it is cognisant of the fact that language carries with it power and its speakers’ perception of the world, among other things (Gill, 2000). This is evident in the key texts selected for this study as they are not only texts written during different periods in the history of amaXhosa but are texts located in different genres. The GDX (1989, 2003, 2006) is located in the field of lexicography, while Tiyo Soga’s (1974) *Intlalo kaXhosa* is located in the socio-linguistics discipline, Khaya Dlanga’s (2015) memoir, *To Quote Myself* is located in the autobiography or biography genre and NokuzolaMndende’s PhD dissertation entitled *Signifying Practices: AmaXhosa Ritual Speech* is located in the field of Religious Studies.

What these texts have in common is their presentation of the life of amaXhosa which is connected to their rituals and practices embedded in isiXhosa. Chouliaraki and Fairclough (2010:1215) argue that discourse analysis is also referred to as a “turn to language,” meaning that language is not solely prioritised for its communicative function (as alluded to above) but for its resourcefulness as a source of knowledge. This resonates with one of Richard Ruiz’s (1984) language orientations which is “language as a resource” for knowledge creation and dissemination. Ruiz (1984) argues that (among others), language ought to be developed so that it is usable as a resource which is conducive to people and serve other functions other than just being a communication instrument. This resonates with the argument advanced by Gill (2000:172) that, “what these perspectives share (discourse analysis perspectives) is a rejection

of the realist notion that language is simply a neutral means of reflecting or describing the world, and a conviction in the central importance of discourse in constructing social life.” Importantly, the SWH (Hussien, 2012:642) supports this notion when it maintains that language is intertwined to how its speakers make sense of the world. This view is in tandem with the world-sense as a theoretical framework as articulated by Maseko (2019), Oyěwùmí (1997) and Mndende (2002) who claim that language is an expression of the world-sense of the people who speak it.

As stated above by Gill (2000:173), discourse analysis is a vast array conglomerate of approaches to read and interpret texts. For the purpose of this study, the deployment of discourse analysis as a methodology focuses on the approaches outlined here. Firstly, this study relies on discourse analysis with the “aim to study the meaning of words but within “chunks” of texts such as conversations or discourses”, Gill (2000:173). Secondly, discourse analysis is deployed in a way that “recognize(s) that the ways in which we commonly understand the world are historically and culturally specific and relative”, Gill (2000:174). Put simply, this study is cognisant of the world-sense of amaXhosa which is studied as one that has influences from other cultures which have become a permanent feature in their linguistic landscape. This means this study looks at the power dynamics involved between isiXhosa and the languages it has come into contact with as well as the impact this has on the speakers of these languages. Furthermore, the selected texts are observed in their own right and as products of their own times. They are not interpreted with the aim of being used as vehicles to reach certain conclusions desirable to the author. Essentially, these texts are examined in relation to how they have been written regarding the ritual and practice of *ukukhapha* during death. Gill (2000:188) explains that, “a discourse analysis is a careful, close reading that moves between texts and context to examine the content, organization and functions of discourse.” In this regard, discourse analysis is deployed to stay true to the intentions of its aims as a methodology.

The first text that is examined is: Reverend Tiyo Burnside (TB) Soga’s (1974) *Intlalo kaXhosa* which is the author’s recollection of traditional amaXhosa life and practices. The text is the author’s call for amaXhosa to return to the ways of life of their forebearers instead of blindly adopting practices that are inspired by their encounter with the West which may not be entirely good for them. Tiyo (TB) Soga is also one of the most influential writers in isiXhosa literary historiography who boasts an impressive body of work which is significant in South Africa and the world over.

He is the nephew of the Reverend Tiyo Soga (whom he is named after) who “was ordained as a Minister in the United Presbyterian Church of Scotland in December 1856,” according to Davis (2015:20). His father, Zaze Soga, was Reverend Soga’s elder half-brother, and was a “ ‘Native Agent’ in the Missionary Record of the United Presbyterian Church (MRUPC) and he translated from English to Xhosa for visiting Scottish ministers as well.” (2015:31). His grandfather, Jotelo (often referred to as Old Soga (Davies, 2015:22), was one of Ngqika’s councillors (Braun 2015:39). Davies (2015) provides a critical biography of Reverend Soga and his works, including his work on “translations of the bible and *The Pilgrim’s Progress* into Xhosa” (Davies, 2015:21). He is also the composer of the best known amaXhosa hymns entitled *Lizalis’ idinga lakho* (Fulfil your promise, God, Lord of truth) according to Drum (2013).

TB Soga like his namesake was an ordained Minister and was a writer (Davies, 2015:21). He translated into isiXhosa his uncle, Tiyo Soga’s first biography, entitled: *U-Tiyo Soga: incwadi yobom bake*, which was authored by John Aitkin Chambers (Davies, 2015:31). His (TB Soga) *Intlalo kaXhosa*, which according to Davies, is his major work remains an important text for anyone who is interested in the traditional amaXhosa life and practices. The Soga family tree spreads wide and far and has been significant in the amaXhosa historiography.

In this thesis *Intlalo kaXhosa* (1974) serves as a primary text on *ukukhapha* and other practices affiliated to it as it deals with the traditional life and practices of amaXhosa. Moreover, Soga is one of amaXhosa writers who lived during the period he recorded in his book mentioned above. This book also contains his own lived experiences of traditional amaXhosa life.

The *Greater Dictionary of isiXhosa* (GDX) is a three-volume dictionary which is known to be the biggest dictionary of an African language. It is a trilingual dictionary with isiXhosa, English and Afrikaans which was produced by the Dictionary Project of the University of Fort Hare in 1967/1968. The first volume with lexical entries from A to J was published in 2006 from the University of Fort Hare, with S.L Tshabe as the Editor in Chief and F.M Shoba as the final Editor. The second volume was published in 2003 edited by B. Mini, with lexical entries from K to P. The third volume with lexical entries from Q to Z was published in 1989, with H.W Pahl as the Editor in Chief and A.M Pienaar and T.A Ndungane as Senior Editors. This volume also includes cultural essays which detail different rites of passage and practices of amaXhosa and their historical and contemporary significance.

Nokuzola Mndende's (2002) PhD thesis entitled *Signifying Practices: amaXhosa Ritual Speech* is an important text which extensively explains the significance of ritual speech in amaXhosa rituals. It is critical to acknowledge that Mndende's works are used throughout this thesis, but her dissertation is one of the key texts due to its elaborate elucidation of amaXhosa ritual speech and practice (both traditional and contemporary times) as stated in the title of her dissertation. Above all, Mndende's thesis is critical to this study as it clarifies the intersection of gender and ritual among amaXhosa. Moreover, Mndende is a scholar and cultural advocate for African Traditional Religion. She was also appointed by President Cyril Ramaphosa to a Commission which is an independent Chapter Nine Institution. According to the HeraldLIVE's Zine George (2019), this institution is a "13-member Commission for Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Cultural, Religious and Linguistic Communities (CRL) Rights Commission." She also hosts the Saturday morning show (05:00-06:00) called *Ibuzwa kwabaphambili* on the Umhlobo Wenene FM radio station (which boasts a listenership of approximately five million). She has authored a number of books among which are: *African Spiritual Journey: Rites of Passage among the Xhosa Speaking of South Africa* (2006); *Tears of Distress: Voices of Denied Spirituality in a Democratic South Africa* (2009); *I will not Surrender!!!* (2012); *Flying with Clipped Wings: Under the Sword of Proselytization in a Secular State* (2016); *The Home as a Sacred Place* (2018) and *From the Margin to Underground Exile: African Traditional Religion in a Democratic State: Deceit and Suppression of the Underprivileged* (2018).

Lastly, the award-winning media and marketing personality, Khaya Dlanga's (2015)'s Chapter Two titled: *A Funeral*, in his memoir, *To Quote Myself*, will be employed to assist this study to navigate *ukukhapha* during death, as an illustration of collective mourning among amaXhosa. Dlanga is also a relatively young person whose recollection of his father's funeral resonates with many amaXhosa people who have experienced the tragedy of losing a parent at a young age. Dlanga is also the author of four books titled: *In My Arrogant opinion* (2012), *To Quote Myself* (2015); *These Things Really Do Happen to Me* (2018) and recently, *It's the Answers for Me* (2020).

This study identifies themes that emerge from these texts' explanations of *ukukhapha* and what these inform us about how the understanding and practice of *ukukhapha* has evolved across time.

1.7 Chapter outline of the study

This study is divided into Six Chapters. Chapter One provided a general background to the study and the contexts in which amaXhosa practice *ukukhapha* both as a rite of passage and as collective mourning, which is expressive of amaXhosa's everyday interactions with each other. The importance of the veneration of ancestors and the communal assistance are key themes clarifying *ukukhapha* during death. Equally so, the veneration of the ancestors through ritual performance facilitated by *ukuthetha* has allowed this study to appreciate the importance of language, not only as a mode of communication but as a source of knowledge which permits it to identify the importance of maintaining and strengthening the relationship between the living and the ancestors. It also strengthens the relationship between the living, which is testimony to the changes that *ukukhapha* during death has undergone. Essentially, this Chapter revealed the importance of language within the context of the word-sense of amaXhosa and how this heterogenous group of people have relied on language to preserve their rites of passage amid missionary and colonial interventions. This is exhibited through the use of euphemisms to describe death which is common among amaXhosa and other Nguni groups such as amaZulu. Discourse analysis is deployed as a methodology for this study and is employed with the aim of engaging and answering this study's research questions.

Chapter Two of this study will cover a review of literature from works germane to the topic of *ukukhapha* and mourning rituals broadly. It will zoom into the mainstream narrative on death emanating from various locations as it emerges from mainstream disciplines such as Anthropology, Psychology and Theology.

Chapter Three of this study will focus on the theoretical framework which is the world-sense as discussed by Oyěwùmí (1997), Maseko (2019), Mndende (1994, 2002, 2006) and the Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis. It will rely on linguistic evidence embedded in isiXhosa as discovered from the tracing of historic and contemporary amaXhosa life.

Chapter Four discusses the findings of this study through reliance on four key texts written in different times of amaXhosa history. These texts provide relatively divergent definitions and illustrations of *ukukhapha* during mourning, extending the tentacles of this research.

Chapter Five of this study will discuss the findings from Chapter Four. It discusses and scrutinizes these against the historical and contemporary evidence of amaXhosa life. The discussion of findings will be steeped on the linguistic evidence that is connected to the

theoretical framework which was detailed in Chapter Three. This will give us a better understanding of *ukukhapha* during death. It also reveals the flexibility and fluidity of isiXhosa which illuminates the intersection between gender and seniority in *ukukhapha*, both as a rite of passage and collective mourning.

Chapter Six concludes this study.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

Introduction

This chapter presents and reviews literature germane to *ukukhapha*, death and mourning as practiced and experienced by amaXhosa specifically, along with other related groups of people. The literature is written by amaXhosa, other Africans and non-Africans as they provide different perspectives on this matter.

Mourning, funeral rites and death have been the preoccupation of psychoanalysis and psychology literature. From these perspectives, normal grieving is a process with a limited spectrum, whose beginning and ending are however clear, starting with shock, disbelief and ends with “adaptive patterns of resolutions and recovery” (Nwoye, 2008:147). The problem with these perspectives, according to Nwoye (2008:147), is their “continued emphasis on the role of the totalitarian, sovereign, or self-sufficient ego of the bereaved individual in resolving grief.” This has led researchers to believe that grief can and should be handled medically (clinically or through therapy), which has led to limited investigations on how culture and community assist bereaved people transcend their loss and grief (Nwoye, 2008:147).

This chapter will reveal that for Africans in general and for amaXhosa in particular, death and mourning are communal affairs which call on family, friends, relatives and the community to assist the bereaved in any way possible to deal with death and the rituals required to give the deceased a decent earthly farewell. Additionally, this Chapter will exhibit that for the aforementioned group of people, death and mourning are an opportunity to strengthen ties between the deceased and the living because the deceased will continue to live in the spiritual world as an ancestor who will be of great significance for the living. The living will also have an opportunity to reconnect with the distant loved ones through their interactions during the mourning period and after the funeral proceedings are concluded. This is contrary to the dominant literature that is presented by the Western Psychology literature which claims that in order for the bereaved to completely heal from the death of a loved one, they need to sever ties with the deceased and undergo various stages to accept their departure and move on.

2.1 Literature on grief and mourning

Chapter Two of this study summarizes the trends in literature from the Psychology, Anthropology and Theology disciplines, largely because they have been preoccupied with

death, grief and mourning. As mentioned above, these disciplines and their understanding of death, grief and mourning is heavily reliant on global hegemonic experiences which pay little to no attention to what is experienced by people in other parts of the world.

The problem with these perspectives, according to Nwoye (2008:147), is their “continued emphasis on the role of the totalitarian, sovereign, or self-sufficient ego of the bereaved individual in resolving grief.” This has led researchers to believe that grief can and should be handled medically (clinically or through therapy). That perspective has led to limited investigations on how culture and community assist bereaved people transcend their loss and grief (Nwoye, 2008:147).

Scholars are finding ways to theorise the nexus between the existential and religious changes that people experience when they are bereaved and mourning. Scholarship on bereavement from African perspectives by Nembahe (1998), Maloka (1998), Ngubane (2004) Nwoye (2005), and Yawa (2010) is critical in articulating the world-senses that have hitherto not been prioritized due to hegemonic worldviews. Nwoye (2005:147) and Martin *et al* (2013:46) state that the significance of African grief scholarship exposes vital differences in how Western and African people conceptualise patterns of mourning. Nwoye (2005:147) maintains that “Western researchers have centred the individual’s reaction to loss; African perspectives prioritize the spiritual/systematic/interactional nature of healing in grieving and the resources provided by the community’s contributions to facilitating healing in the bereaved”. Nwoye (2005:148) further argues that community intervention in Africa promotes healing as their assistance helps the bereaved to give the deceased a decent farewell while assisting them to attend to crucial projects that were left incomplete by the deceased.

Marrone (1999:498) states that “since the beginning of the field of thanatology, researchers and theorists have been preoccupied with attempts describing stages, phases and tasks affiliated with the process of human grieving and mourning.” Carton (2003:201) states that various meanings around death and mourning in Africa have always been the pre-occupation of Anthropology literature exploring the nexus between the living and the dead. Anthropologists and theologians alike were solely concerned with death in Africa in the 20th century as they studied the living and the departed (Carton, 2003:201). What is missing in dominant Western literature is the communal aspect of mourning, which entails showing up for the bereaved and “holding them up” as they continue living. Dominant Anthropology literature has been preoccupied with burial, the corpse (Martin *et al*, 2013 and Carton,

2003:202), contemporary funeral ceremonies such as “after tears” parties (Lukhele, 2016 and Setsiba, 2017) and widowhood (Ntantala, 1961; Somhlaba and Wait, 2008) but seldom investigate the interactions between funeral arrangements and communal mourning.

Most literature on mourning, grief, loss and trauma has always emanated from the Western worldviews which assume that these are individual experiences which can be dealt with in isolation and that regular life resumes after all the stages dealing with such have been addressed, sharply contradicting the communal experience entrenched in African world-senses (McLea and Mayers, 2017:424). Carroll (2014:258) maintains that the concept of world-sense/view has been used by scholars of African descent to articulate the Africana life, history and culture. Vernon Dixon in Carroll (2014:258) used the worldview concept and framework to analyse the intersectionality of race, culture and economics. World-sense refers to the ways of knowing, how people view the world and make sense of it based on their lived realities, ontology and epistemologies. This is contrary to the hegemonic Euro-American epistemology which has universalised its perspectives, thus relegating non-Euro-American epistemologies to myths and folklore (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013, Maseko ,2018 and Oyěwù mí, 1997). IsiXhosa, like Yoruba language and oral traditions (Oyěwù mí, 1997:32), is a major source of knowledge where the world-sense of amaXhosa is embedded as a reservoir of changes in history and interpreting social structures. The amaXhosa world-sense, through *ukukhapha* allows amaXhosa to experience mourning, hoping to heal, restore and make meaning at an individual and communal level.

2.2 AmaXhosa rites of passage

In most African societies such as the Nguni communities, (see Chapter One, section 1.2 for a detailed discussion of amaXhosa) there are different rites of passage which mark a change in their life stages and serve as an indicator of elevation from one level of life to the next. Soga (1974:59-80 and 121-134), GDX (1989:722-750) Mtuze (2004:15-69) and Henda (2021) name and describe these important amaXhosa rites of passage which are: *ukukhutyazwa* (waving through the smoke); *efukwini* (behind the door-birth rites); *ntonjane* (female puberty rites) and *ulwaluko* (traditional male circumcision), marriage and death. These rites of passage are characterised by moving from one stage to the next by letting go of the previous manner in which one lived, being ‘reincorporated’ into society (Henda, 2021). According to Henda (2021:01), these rites of passage, “...signify embracing new life, new ways of doing things.” This change allows the person to undergo various stages within the rite which teaches and prepares him/her for his/her new position in life.

With regards to birth, Mbiti (1969:149) has this to say, “birth is the first rhythm of a new generation and the rites of birth are performed in order to make the child a corporate and social being.” These birth rites are an affirmation that the child is part of a community and that it is through her/his community that their humanness is confirmed, which is true to *ukukhapha* in every season of amaXhosa life. Being with people, whether *bayakukhapha* (they are accompanying you) or being in their presence means that one is part of something bigger than him or her, hence the Nguni linguistic groups’ understanding of ubuntu is that “*umntu ngumntu ngabantu*” (this saying has no single translation but in this study it means that “my humanity is affirmed by other humans”).

The *Ukukhutyazwa* ritual according to Mtuze (2004:22-23) is a ritual performed for a newly-born child. Citing Soga (1931:22), he describes this ritual as one that is performed after the baby has had his/her first wash/bath on his/her birthday (2004:22-23). This ceremony is called *ukukhutyazwa emsini* (waving through the smoke). He further explains that:

A fire is made on the women’s side of the hut, that is on the left of the entrance. Coals are taken from a fire already burning. Twigs of the *umnukambiba* (*clausena inaequalis*), also called *isifutho*, which have previously been collected are placed on the coals, and when the smoke, which is of an acrid smell, rises, the mother takes the baby in her arms, then holding both little arms in one hand, and the little legs in another, waves the infant gently to and fro through the smoke, exclaiming “*wush*”, “*wush*,” “*wush*,” turning the infant about meanwhile so that it shall have all parts of its body touched by the smoke.

Mtuze (2004:23) who had not personally experienced this ritual notices that Soga does not mention that it is alleged that as the mother waves the infant over the smoke she “utters words to the effect that the child should deny even what she/he knows to be fact.” From where the current researcher comes from, kuQumbu, this ritual is practiced in this day and age even though it is not popular. It is also alleged that the mother utters these words to the baby, “*ungaze uyithethe inyani*” (“never speak the truth” or “you must deny the truth”) as she waves her/him over the smoke. Mtuze (2004:23) argues that it was for the reason mentioned above that the missionaries regarded this ritual as abhorrent and has been eroded or practiced in secret by the Africans. Mtuze (2004:23) speculates that this ritual existed for the purpose of instilling loyalty in a child to their own country, to their own country folk and never to betray them in the event that she/he is captured during the wars of colonialisation and would rather die than commit treason.

Imbeleko/efukwini is performed for a new born baby among amaXhosa to introduce the infant to both the living family members and ancestors as a new member of the family. The GDX (1989:739-740) defines this rite of passage that is also known as *Idini lembeleko* (the rite of the carrying skin) *okanye lokuqaba umntwana* (to smear the baby with traditional ointments) as, “a sacrificial rite observed in a home at an important stage of life, viz at birth or initiation into the world of the living, to introduce the child to the ancestral shades whose protection is necessary.” Mtuze (2004:15) states that this ritual is also known as *ukubingelela* ritual. According to Mtuze (2004:15), this is a ritual that is celebrated by the whole community whose involvement is pivotal as the child is incorporated into society. Henda (2021) explains that traditionally, before the introduction of hospital birth deliveries (some women in the most rural parts of the Eastern Cape still prefer to give birth at home with the assistance of traditional midwives), the *efukwini* (behind the door) was an important place as this is a special hut where the mother would deliver the baby and spend a few days (usually ten days) in seclusion. This is a special place where no man is allowed to enter, it is a space reserved for the mother (*umdlezana*) and other older women who are her aids.

After the baby’s umbilical cord has fallen, it is a mother’s duty to find a place that is solely known to her, where she will bury it, ensuring that the umbilical cord is not at risk of falling into the hands of evil doers who may want to harm the baby (Henda, 2021:02). The GDX (1989:739-740) explains that this rite of passage is marked by the slaughtering of a goat whose skin will be used by the mother to carry the baby in, hence the term *imbeleko*, taken from the verb *ukubeleka*. Mtuze (2004:15) concurs with this description of *imbeleko*, however, he states that this is marked by the slaughtering of a sheep whose skin will be used by the mother to carry the baby on her back. Referring to this ritual as *ukuqaba umntwana* according to Mtuze (2004:15) means “to smear the child’s face with traditional ointments.”

Soga (1974:131) describes the ritual of *ukubingelela umntwana* (another term for *imbeleko*) which was performed to ensure that the child does not get sick and grows into a healthy adult. This ritual was also regarded as a witchcraft repellent. Soga (1974: 131-132) also reports that in other parts of Central Africa, a king’s infant son would be emersed and baptised in four types of bloods. The first one would be from the leopard for courage; the lion’s blood for strength to overpower other kings would follow as the lion is the king of the jungle; then follows the sheep’s blood so that the king is humble enough for the thrown and lastly the mamba’s blood for wealth and glamour especially for the king’s attire (Soga, 1974:132).

The naming of a child among amaXhosa is also an essential event, even though it is not a ritual, but it is important to mention it here since it carries with it the parents' aspirations and hope for their child. Mtuze (2004:18) claims that traditionally, among amaXhosa, the naming of a child was a privilege reserved solely for the father, but now even the mother can name a child. Soga (1931:294) in Mtuze (2004:18) explains that the naming of a boy child is regarded as a serious matter which can only be done by the father but a girl child can be named by either parents. Mtuze (2004:18) citing Soga (1931:294) states that traditionally, amaXhosa named their children two or three years after she/he was born. Until then, the child would be referred to as "*ntamekana*," which is the equivalent of "little one" or "baby." Soga (1974:132) states that upon a person's death, they are referred to as "*ngumfi ubani*" (deceased so and so). Equally so, the name given to a child emanated from a matter/event affecting the family, a major event that affected the public in a tremendous way or a natural phenomenon (Mtuze, 2004:18-19) and Soga (1974:133). That is why even though the older amaXhosa may not have known the year they were born in, they ascertained their age through the aforementioned events.

Intonjane is a girls' rite of passage that is performed after a girl has had her first menstrual period, which marks a transition from girlhood to womanhood (Mupotsa, 2014; Sotewu, 2016:01; Henda, 2021:03). Soga (1974:60) states that this rite of passage is an equivalent of the boys' *lwaluko* (boys' initiation). This is where she, along with a group of her peers will be secluded in a hut (*ejakeni*), for at least a month where they will receive teachings and guidance from senior women, mainly her paternal aunt - on how to conduct themselves as women - a new stage of life that they will enter after the completion of this period (Soga, 1974:61; Sotewu, 2016:03; Henda, 2021:03). Mtuze (2004:29) explains that the *intonjane* (the initiate) stays in the *jaka* with a group of women known as *aba-khaphi* (companions) who provide her daily support such as accompanying her wherever she is permitted to go to until the end of initiation. For AmaZulu, this rite of passage is known as *umemulo* (Mntambo, 2020) which is a signifier of good girlhood behaviour (*ukuyiphatha kahle*, see Mntambo, 2020).

The *ntonjane* along with her *bakhaphi* (companions) were not allowed to eat certain foods such as milk and sour-milk just like any other traditional amaXhosa girl during her menstrual periods. The successful completion of this rite of passage signals to the family and community members that the girl turned woman is eligible for marriage as she has undergone this ritual which among other things, is a sign that she knows what is expected of her as a wife to her husband and his family (Sotewu, 2016:04; Henda, 2021:03-04). A married woman with children can be asked by the ancestors to undergo *intonjane* as this is regarded as a spiritual

rite of passage and for certain women who have not undergone *intonjane* may be unable to conceive children until she undergoes the ritual as demanded by the ancestors (Soga, 1974:61). This ritual, just like all the other rituals performed by amaXhosa is also facilitated by the slaughtering of an animal which in this case is a goat (Henda, 2021:03). The GDX (1989:737) posits that in the event that this rite of passage is not performed for the woman when she was still a girl or when she was unmarried, her ancestors may require that she has it performed for her as it is also associated with her fertility. For contemporary amaXhosa, particularly Christians, this rite of passage has largely been replaced by the Twenty First Birthday party which is characterised by Christian practices such as prayer, singing of hymns and church members along with the priest giving the girl advice on how to conduct herself as a new woman. In certain instances, these Twenty First Birthday parties are filled with secular practices which among other things include playing secular music, where dancing is the order of the day with a few speeches from the elders from time to time as counsel to the young woman pertaining to her future role in womanhood.

Ulwaluko (traditional male circumcision) is a boys' rite of passage from boyhood to manhood. This is marked by various stages from the traditional medical procedure by the *ingcibi* (traditional circumcision surgeon) through to the completion (Henda, 2021:04). This is one of the rituals that have survived and "remained resilient throughout the colonial, apartheid and post-apartheid eras" explains Qambela (2021:55). Be that as it may, this ritual has not been spared from controversy as it has over time been under scrutiny owing to the alarming initiates' deaths, penile amputations, dehydration, abuse and neglect. Despite this criticism, countless boys embark on this journey from boyhood to manhood (Ntombana, 2009:73; Ntombana, 2011; Qambela, 2021:57). Due to these fatalities and incidents, there have been calls made by politicians, community members and church leaders for this rite of passage to be abolished (Ntombana, 2009:74). This will not be further pursued and discussed in this study as it is out of its scope.

The boys are also secluded and isolated from the general community as they are either located in a make-shift hut located next to or in a forest or mountain where they are taught various survival skills by their *ikhankatha* (initiation school teacher/traditional guardian) (GDX 1989:725; Ntombana, 2009:73; Henda, 2021:04). Ntombana (2009:75-76) explains that, "they also undergo supervised physical training to overcome difficulties and pain to cultivate courage, endurance, perseverance and obedience." Initially this rite of passage would be as long as three months, but due to the changes it has undergone, it has been reduced to between

four to six weeks (GDX, 1989:725). Significant changes have occurred in the practice of this rite of passage as its location has shifted from the ‘bush’ to the hospital due the deaths of initiates (*abakhwetha*) (GDX, 1989:724; Ntombana, 2011). This groups of young men upon completing their initiation process will become *amakrwala* (initiation graduates) who will be deemed fit to join society as ‘new men’.

Marriage is another important life stage for amaXhosa as it marks a significant stage for the newly-weds which is to start a family. The bond created by marriage is one that transcends the physical realm as it joins two families together through lobola, which Cakata and Ramose (2021) refer to as *ukucela ukuzalwa* (a process of requesting blood relations). After the lobola stage is completed, the bride is introduced to her husband’s ancestors through the ritual of *ukutyiswa amasi* (consuming sour milk). Mndende (2002:163) equates the ritual of *ukutyiswa amasi* to attaining a marriage certificate. Some amaXhosa families usually perform the *ukutyiswa amasi* ritual or *utsiki* along with the white wedding ceremony (Qambela 2021:54). However, some usually prefer the white wedding only (Mupotsa, 2015). Mtuze (2004:29) explains that marriage is not just a romantic union between two individuals or the unity of two families rather, “it is something that involves the whole community because of the communal nature of traditional African society.”

The involvement of the community is instrumental in any marriage and the building of a family which is a significant part of the community, thus ensuring the continuity of life in the general society. Furthermore, Mbiti (1990:130) explains that, “for African peoples, marriage is the focus of existence. It is the point where all the members of a given community meet: the departed, the living and those yet to be born.” Mbiti (1969:133-134) reports that marriage is significant for the Africans as it is an avenue for procreation and without procreation, a marriage is incomplete. This is not the case for contemporary African societies where married couples make the conscious decision not to have children or where they may be prohibited from having children due to fertility issues.

After the wedding proceedings have been concluded from the brides side, she is accompanied by a bridal party known as *uduli* explains the GDX (1989:742). *Uduli* is a group of women and men who accompany the bride to her marital home with gifts such as kitchen utensils that she will use to set up her marital home. Furthermore, this group of people bring with them a heifer, known as *inkomo yobulungu* which is a gift from her father which belongs solely to her and may not be claimed by the husband for whatever reason and may not be

included as his asset in the event of debt settlement (GDX, 1989:742; Jordan ,1984). *Ukukhapha* in marriage (and in every season) of amaXhosa life is significant as it corresponds with *ukukhapha* during death which accentuates the communal spirit embodied in the African world-sense.

The most notable and inevitable life stage of amaXhosa is death which as mentioned above is a physical separation of the deceased from the living to join the ancestral realm. More of this stage will be elaborated further in this study. Essentially, Africans in general, specifically amaXhosa value communal ties with the living and the ancestors who form a larger community between the visible and the invisible world which serves to maintain a balance between both these worlds. According to Mbiti (1969:152), this proves that the deceased are not entirely exterminated but are the living-dead because death is just a “disruption of the rhythm of life.” This disruption is critical as it paves way for the deceased to journey into another step in life which is regarded as the highest level - being an ancestor. Mndende (2002:130) concurs and states that, “death is an opening to another life, a continuation of the present one, but it is a life that is considered to be holy, powerful, and eternal.” Spiritual life for amaXhosa is held in high regard as it is more magnificent than the short lived physical life. Mndende (2002:144) also outlines that there are three obligatory rituals which have to be performed after an individual’s death in order to clear their path for a successful transition from the physical world into the spiritual world. According to Mndende (2002:14), these rituals are *izila* (mourning), *ukukhapha* (accompanying) and *ukubuyisa* (bringing back).

2.3 The role of the ancestors in African spirituality

As will be shown throughout the following Chapters, communication between the living and ancestors is significant to maintain a balance between the physical and the spiritual worlds, so as to ensure that a holistic relationship between these worlds is sustained. Communication between these worlds is conducted through ritual speech, slaughtering of sacrificial animals and dreams (which for the purpose of this study will not be discussed in any elaborate manner). Ancestors as intermediaries (Mbiti 1969:83) between the living and the Creator (*Qamata*) are in the world-sense of amaXhosa important members of the physical realm even though they have transitioned into the spiritual realm (Ndlovu (1991:34) in Mndende (2013:78). Mbiti (1969:83) adds that:

they (living-dead) are guardians of family affairs, traditions, ethics and activities. Offence on these matters is ultimately an offence to the forefathers who, in that capacity, act as the invisible police of the families and communities.

The bones of the ancestors of amaXhosa as well as their final resting places or *ikhaya lokugqibela* (eternal home) are considered to be sacred. That is why when communicating with the spirit of their ancestors, they refer to *amathambo alele ukuthula* (Mndende, 2002:98). It is for this reason that Mndende (2002:98) explains that, “it is believed that the bones of the deceased are ‘vocal’ and can communicate with the living on behalf of the deceased.” This is aligned to the first part of this study which states that, “*ethule nje usathetha*” (even though she/he may be physically silenced by death she/he still speaks in the spiritual realm) (Mndende 2013:80). Above all, Mndende (2002:98) articulates this belief by concisely explaining that, “the bones of the deceased are imbued with human qualities and are regarded as having the ability to hear, see, speak as well as display feelings like anger or mercy.” This resonates with Mbiti (1969:84) who explains that:

Even if the living-dead may not perform miracles or extraordinary things to remedy the need, men experienced a sense of psychological relief when they pour out their hearts’ troubles before their seniors who have a foot in both worlds.

Constant communication between the living and the living-dead through rituals accords the living a sense of comfort that things are working out for their good, and thus, continue being hopeful of good outcomes as their belief and conviction that their ancestors are listening is enough affirmation. Like amaXhosa, for AmaZulu the ancestors fill up the gap between God and the living. Ngubane (2004:173) elaborates by stating that, “it is believed that they sustain and nurture the interests of their descendants and serve as the bridge between the physical and the spiritual worlds.” Ancestors in the world-sense of amaXhosa as mentioned above play a significant role in the lives of the living. Ndlovu (1991:34) in Mndende (2013:77) explains that:

The ways of referring to ancestors in African languages points to five fundamental beliefs and principles:

- A recognition that each human being is made up of not only flesh, bones and blood, but also has a spirit or soul.
- A belief that whereas the human body dies and decomposes, the spirit (soul) does not perish.
- An understanding that human relations, especially within the family circle, do not die, but their relationship, once established, goes on forever.
- A recognition of the unique relationship that exists between the “Creator Spirit” and the human; ultimately,
- The fact that in light of the above, the spirits of the departed play a vital role of intermediaries.

African societies' kinship systems consist of the living, the ancestors and those that are yet to be born, evidence of the importance of the veneration of the visible and the invisible worlds respectively (Mndende, 2013:78). That is why for Africans in general, and for amaXhosa in particular, it is crucial that, "every transformation in the development of the living individual must be publicly announced in order to officially inform both the living and the deceased members of the community" according to Mndende (2013:78).

Rituals as will be shown throughout this study in the form of *ukukhapha*- are vital to maintain the lifeforce of amaXhosa. Henda (2021:01) explains that, "amaXhosa use rituals to negotiate a responsible relationship in the human community, with the ancestors, spirits, divinities and cosmos, (2) thus becoming a way of life." This implies the meaning embedded in these rituals used by their practitioners to "establish a link between the present moment and original reality", explains Henda (2021:01). Mndende (2002:118) adds that the ancestors are located everywhere and are not confined to a single place. These spaces among others include the rivers known as *umzi omkhulu* (great house), graves, forests, the sea, the cattle kraal and other such spaces.

It is crucial to note that elaborate rituals performed because of death are not solely for the deceased to transition into the ancestral realm but they also serve as a continuation with the work left unfinished by the deceased. This is done through appointing people to take over from where they left off. When they pass on, the deceased depart with the comfort that their work will outlive them as it is bequeathed from one generation to the next.

As will be shown in Chapter Four in Tiyo Soga's *Intlalo kaXhosa*, that the death, especially of the elders (because of their old age) is surrounded by her/his loved ones who pay close attention to the words uttered as they are wishes, aspirations and hopes that the dying may have for the remaining family and community members. Mndende (2002:119-120) refers to this as *umyolelo*. She (2002:120) adds that, "*umyolelo* refers to the information imparted, before death, to the living members of the clan". The dying elder, among other things, leaves these messages as an attempt to ensure that their legacy particularly *umzi* (homestead) is not abandoned, forgotten or destroyed as their *imizi* (homesteads) are a significant part of their imprint or footprint on this earth and are an affirmation that they were indeed once alive. Mndende (2002:120) succinctly states that :

The concern about the disappearance of his/her name after death is reflected in the words of an elder who can be heard admonishing his children by saying: 'I do not want

my *umzi* (homestead) to perish and you find people saying *umzi wawulapha wayangaphi na?* ('where is the homestead that was here?').

Having said this, the living are also accorded new roles which are essential to the continuity of the name and good deeds of the departed, especially if the deceased is the head of the household. This means that the eldest son will have to take over this role as the heir and new head of the household. The sacred words uttered by the dying on their deathbed serve as guidelines for the living to fulfil their wishes and instructions. Mndende (2002:120) justifies this act by explaining that, "the living are bound to fulfil any obligations expressed by a person on their deathbed as s/he is regarded as being in a state of transition to the spiritual world." Failure to adhere to these wishes and instructions will lead to a number of catastrophic events for the living as the ancestors (particularly the deceased who made these wishes and instructions) may turn their backs on them. A C. Jordan's *Ingqumbo Yeminyanya* (1940) or the English translation by his wife Priscilla Phyllis Jordan (nee Ntantala) and A.C. Jordan in 1980 entitled *The Wrath of the Ancestors* gives a clear depiction of what happens to the living when they defy or neglect the wishes and requests of their ancestors (Moropa and Nokele, 2008:69). It is against this backdrop that for the living, particularly for the Africans in general, specifically amaXhosa, death and mourning are communal because they create a space and a moment for family and community members to assist the bereaved with the completion of tasks left incomplete by the deceased, such as the building of a house(s), paying for children's tuition and the like (Nwoye, 2005:153). Nwoye (2005:149) argues that, "the bereaved in Africa are never left in the dark about what is expected of them or what to expect from the culture." For the African world-sense, the communal engagements and interactions are a mirror of their culture. It reflects their ways of life. Taking care of the dying and bereaved is another signifier of the spirit of *ubuntu* and togetherness.

Conclusion

This Chapter revealed that dominant literature on death, grief and mourning emanates (psychological stages) from the West which advocates for an individualistic approach to an understanding of death. For the African, grief is communal and is shared by the community through various forms of support provided to the bereaved. Ancestors play a central role in the lives of the living. Constant communication has to be maintained between the living and the departed by performing various rituals and rites where *ukukhapha* is constant. Death for the African is a continuation of life, which repositions the deceased into an elevated state of life,

that of being an ancestor. This is in sharp contrast to the Western world view where the living have to cut off ties with the deceased in order to heal and move on with their lives.

Chapter Three

The Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis (SWH) and World-Sense

Introduction

This Chapter locates the Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis (SWH) and World-Sense as theoretical frameworks that will be used to understand *ukukhapha* in amaXhosa's lives, particularly in death. To develop and establish the relationship between the SWH and world-sense, this Chapter employs language (isiXhosa) which is a conduit between people's thoughts and actions informing their rituals and practices. It is for these reasons (among others) that this Chapter will explore how language as a carrier of African's world-sense illustrates how women and men practice *ukukhapha* in different seasons of amaXhosa's lives, particularly during mourning.

Using Oy w m 's (1997) analysis on language and world-sense, alongside the SWH, this Chapter reveals that African languages epitomise African world-sense(s). We gain a deeper appreciation of the amaXhosa world-sense because of the use of African languages (particularly isiXhosa) expressions in the context of mourning practices such as *ukukhapha*. The works of Mndende (2006) and Maseko (2019) are used to illustrate amaXhosa world-sense in conjunction with the SWH embedded in isiXhosa. The role of community is understood through the study of language use in relation to *ukukhapha* during death. Dube (2012:128) argues that, "the community is the body of African Religious thinking." In essence, it is through the community that ubuntu is demonstrated.

3.1 The Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis (SWH)

The Sapir-Whorf hypothesis (SWH) posits that human thoughts are shaped by the languages that they speak. This in turn informs their world differently (Skerrett, 2010:331; Hussein, 2012:642). It is through language that we articulate our thoughts. Therefore, language influences our understanding of the world and environment, both naturally and socially. According to Skerrett (2010:331), "language appears to exert considerable influence over how people categorise, evaluate, and remember the world, especially in languages where nouns belong to different semantic categories." The Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis is also known as Linguistic Relativity Hypothesis (Tohidian, 2008:65). Koerner (1992:175), Skerrett (2010:332), Regier and Xu (2017:01) as well as Kay and Kempton (1984:65) posit that this

hypothesis was named after two researchers, Edward Sapir and his student Benjamin Whorf, “who studied Native American languages and found what they believed to be evidence for linguistic features that forced speakers to think differently” (Skerrett, 2010:332).

Owing to their different languages, according to the SWH, people experience and view the world differently. Their experiences are embedded in their languages which in turn reflect their worldview(s) and world-sense(s). Koerner (1992:179) concurs by arguing that “language is the mirror of the mind and determines the worldview of the speaker.” Resultantly, it is through people’s languages that we can understand their actions, cultures, customs and thoughts which reflect their experience with nature, other human beings and their surroundings. According to the SWH language conditions, languages reflect the worldviews of their speakers. By using language as a vehicle of linguistic articulation, we can easily understand how different people experience the world and how this shapes and influences their thoughts of the world around them.

The SWH has not only been the pre-occupation of the linguistics discipline but it has attracted interest from disciplines such as Psychology and Anthropology. Skerrett (2010:331) like Hussein (2012:642) explains that, “it is generally accepted by psychologists that language is the major feature of culture: language is the embodiment of culture and culture influences language use.” Furthermore, Hussein (2012:642) maintains that one cannot understand a people’s language without an appreciation and understanding of their culture. Language and culture are interdependent. They cannot be separated as they influence each other in giving people a clear understanding of their ways of knowing, their ontology and cosmology, to mention a few. It is for this reason that the Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis is key and central to Psychologists as it has the potential to give them easy access to people’s thoughts, a propeller of their actions. Hunt and Agnoli (1991:386) like Lucy (2005:298) maintain that, “language provides the coding system for transmission of an idea from one person to another.” As a mode of communication, language allows people to successfully predict what the other persons want to do and how to respond to that.

The SWH was founded on a study on colour. Sapir and Whorf conducted an experiment on the study of naming of colour as Thompson and Thompson (1975:111) maintain that the naming of colour “is one of the very few aspects of reality that can be specified by objective scientific methods.” Out of the SWH, there is the Strong (Linguistic Determinism) and Weak (Linguistic Relativity) versions. The strong version states that language determines thought,

and the weak version dictates that people who speak different languages perceive and think about the world differently (Kasonde, 2008:52). For Shochat and Stam (1985:36) the SWH states that “language is culture.”

The SWH is not spared from criticism and there are justifications for the critics. Regier and Xu (2017:01) maintain that the SWH is controversial for at least two reasons; one theoretical and the other empirical. According to Skerrett (2010:332), “in psychology, the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis enjoyed general acceptance until the early 1970s, at which time serious doubt was cast over the theory and a more universalist perspective began to take hold.” Researchers in Psychology according to Skerrett (2010:332) were convinced that “language did not shape thought as such, it only provided different ways of describing the way all humans in fact experienced the world.” This notion that language does not shape people’s thoughts maintains that language as a communication tool is used by human beings to describe their view of the world. However, this does not mean that people’s thoughts should only be confined to the languages that they speak.

This study slightly deviates and digresses from this argument by maintaining that, even if one may learn to speak a certain language, that does not give them a full understanding of the world of the people who are mother tongue speakers. This is because their understanding of other people’s worlds is clouded or influenced by their own biases (whether conscious or unconscious) which is a result of their worldviews and language(s). Mazrui and Mazrui (1998:57) explain that, “language use, therefore, is not simply an act of communication and acceptance of the sociocultural presuppositions that make communication possible, but also a means of signifying a particular relationship with the other, with one’s interlocutors.” Language influences how people interact with each other due to the socio-economic and socio-political connotations affiliated with their languages.

One of the major issues of the SWH according to Hunt and Agnoli (1991:377) is that translatability as it “contradicts the strongest version of the SWH, which states that a thought expressible in one language may not be expressible in another.” This is possible if there are similarities, if these languages share cultural practices or if they have experienced the same or similar events. As a result, “one language may have a single term for a concept that has to be described in another language” according to Hunt and Agnoli (1991:378). Even if translatability is not possible due to differences in language and culture, Mazrui (1992:66) argues that “all languages are considered to be at par with each other in terms of their ability

to carry out the intended functions of the language faculty.” A fine example is the fact that English, like any other Western language, has no equivalent term for the practice of *ilobola* because this does not exist in any of the Western cultures, even the term ‘bride price’ is insufficient to serve as an English equivalent to *lobola*. One would argue that even the word *dowry* is insufficient to fully interpret or translate the *lobola* process. As a result, amaXhosa would argue that isiXhosa *asitolikwa* (isiXhosa is not translatable), hence such words are used as they are in other European languages like English.

Bing (1992:11) like Khosroshahi (1989:506) disapproves of the use of the male pronouns such as ‘he’ and ‘his’ in English as encompassing objectivity and being representative of all people (mankind). They maintain that choosing male pronouns gives an impression that “masculine generic words help to perpetuate an androcentric worldview,” according to Khosroshahi (1989:506). Given that the SWH maintains that language shapes the way we think, it (SWH) ignores how languages can be used as a powerful symbol for group identity and cultural pride. This could imply that English speakers think of masculinity as the most significant gender, with men (biological males) at the apex of humanity and non-males (biological females) at the bottom.

3.2 The Sapir-Whorf hypothesis in African languages and cultures

Linguists such as Alexander (2007), Bodomu (1996), Mazrui (1995) are of the view that naturally, there is no language hierarchy of value. That is why Shochat and Stam (1983:36) like Mazrui (1992:66) maintain that, “all languages are equal, but some are made more equal than others.” Due to power dynamics, certain languages are elevated at the expense of other languages due to political interferences and cultural dominance. A good example is the hegemony of the English language, which is dominant in the finance and technology industries as it is utilised to further propel Anglo-American power owing to its colonial heritage (Shochat and Stam, 1983:36). Languages such as English, French and Portuguese enjoy a significant amount of popularity in the choice of languages that people use, particularly in Africa owing to the colonial project which has led to linguicide in the continent. This is not because of their charm or eloquence, but it is a direct yield of the colonial project – these are languages that were utilised by the colonisers from the northern hemisphere, particularly from the Euro-American region. As colonialism spread, nature, people, cultures, cosmologies and epistemologies were altered or worse, destroyed, while others thrived. As stated earlier on, languages carry with them peoples’ cultures and their being. Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o (1986) in Mazrui (1992:65) asserts that “the domination of people’s languages by languages of the

colonizing nations was crucial to the domination of the mental universe of the colonized.” Salawu (2010:66) further pursues this thought as he opines that, “because of the significant role that language plays in the totality of culture, any impairment or erosion of a people’s language, significantly signposts the death of that people’s culture and, essentially, the essence of their being.” Therefore, this study re-centres the world-senses of a people (amaXhosa) that were forced to the margins of knowledge creation. Lucy (2005:308) argues that because of the biases, which are carried by group identity that elevates certain languages at the expense of other languages “we risk misunderstanding the interpretations of reality in other languages and their influence on thought if we do not control our own biases.”

Different languages act as a conduit for their speakers to their cultures, feelings as well as their natural and social environments. This explains why Bodomo (1996:33) argues that “languages are similar in the sense that each is a system of signs for encoding meaning and realities of the world.” Using Ghana as a case in point, Bodomo (1996:33) maintains that “an important element of language, however, is that it is also culture-specific: each language is systematically different from others in the sense that it has a particular way of arranging the signs that encode meaning, and of communicating the world to its speaker.” Tohidian (2009:65) attests to this by maintaining that “speakers of different languages think differently about the world.” To add on to that, language acts as an important reservoir of people’s worldviews and world-senses as well as making these worldviews and world-senses clearer and more eloquent to other people from different cultures who have differing worldviews and world-senses. It is for this reason that people can intelligibly articulate and receive new ideas and technologies which are communicated through their languages (Bodomo, 1996:34). Kay and Kempton (1984:66) also support this as they argue that “the structure of anyone’s native language strongly influences or fully determines the world-view he (she) will acquire as he (she) learns the language.” Language can and should be seen as a currency and a resource (Ruiz, 1984).

Whorf was a strong advocate for the strong version of the SWH as he argued that there must be marked differences in thought as in languages. The weak version of the SWH on the other hand was informed by a study on colour by various languages which concluded that “colours are remembered better if there is a simple name for them” (Tohidian, 2009:71). Therefore, the outcomes from the strong and weak version of the SWH according to Tohidian (2009:73) is that firstly “language is a powerful tool in shaping thought about abstract ideas and secondly that native language is important in shaping habitual thought.”

Nigerian languages such as Igbo, Yoruba, Hausa and many more, have proven that the SWH must be valid as Obiegbu (2016:79) maintains that “each language mirrors the values of its speakers.” This is because it would be futile to teach one any of these languages without grounding them in the knowledge of the cultures embedded in these languages. It therefore suffices to argue that language, culture and thought are intertwined. Kasonde (2008:92) maintains that different people may pay more attention to certain domains because of their location; an example is the agricultural people of Rwanda who have vast cattle terminology. Furthermore, Kasonde (2008:92) alludes to Icibemba language of the Ababemba people of DRC and Zambia whose linguistic categories of time and tense differ significantly to that of the common Indo-European model. An example is “how the future and past tenses in Icibemba do not carry total linguistic symmetry like in English, French and German, with considerable reduction for the tenses” (Kasonde, 2008:92). It suffices to advance that Shochat and Stam (1985:36) attest to this as they opine that each language is designed to cater for and accommodate its cultural needs and the cultural realities of its speakers.

A study which was inspired by the SWH conducted by Davies and Corbett (1997), between English and Setswana (spoken in Botswana) on colour categories as well as Davies, Sowden, Jerrett, Jerrett and Corbett (1998:02) discovered that Setswana uses the same term for the colour blue and green whereas English has a variety of terms for these colours. According to Davies *et al* (1998:03), English has up to eleven basic terms for colours which are white, black, red, yellow, blue, brown, purple, pink, orange and grey whereas Setswana has five basic terms for colour which are *bosweu* (white), *bontsho* (black), *bohibidu* (red), *botala* (blue), *borokwa* (brown). Davies *et al* (1998:14) concluded that, “the universal constraints on colour perception may be modulated by small cultural influences, including language.” This affirms the SWH between English and Setswana as the colour varieties are influenced by their languages and environments, which shape their realities and their perception of the world. Wolof, like Setswana does not differentiate between certain colours such as orange and yellow (Davies *et al* 1998:15).

3.3 The African World-sense

Africans are a religious people who have a firm belief in the Divine and do not make a separation between the material and spiritual world, thus they do not value the visible and ignore the invisible (Mtuze, 1999; Oyèwùmí, 1997; Mndende, 2002; Dube, 2012). The world-sense of amaXhosa has a belief system which values a balanced combination of the invisible as it does to the visible. It is against this backdrop that this study uses the term “world-sense”

instead of the popular “worldview” as stated elsewhere in this study. Solomon (1986:40) explicates the world-sense of amaXhosa pertaining to life after death as one that resembles the physical world. She argues that the only difference between these worlds is that the physical world is visible to the naked eye yet the spirit world is invisible, it can only be seen or accessed through the spiritual spectacle (1986:41). Furthermore, she alludes to the belief among amaXhosa that even though the living may not be able to physically see the spirits of the departed, the spirits can see what the living are doing. That explains why amaXhosa have a very intimate relationship with their ancestors (Solomon, 1986:40).

By examining *ukukhapha* as an expression of everyday life and world-sense, this study partially gazes at some cultural rituals and practices owing to the limitations of the scope of this study. A worldview and world-sense are people’s ways of knowing which among other things consists of a people’s language, history, values, ideas, culture, spirituality and music. People’s world-senses influence and shape their lived experiences, which are central to their belief systems. It is for this reason that different people have different worldviews and world-senses (Matoane 2012:108). Thabede (2008:233) maintains that, “people do not see things in the same way, and the way they see things is dependent on their cultural beliefs.” These differences in worldviews and world-senses are not a reason to elevate other worldviews and world-senses at the expense of the other worldviews and world-senses. It is not a justification for the presentation of a certain worldview/world-sense as universal while relegating other worldviews/senses to the margins, thus rendering them insignificant and worthy of utter demolition.

According to Busia (1955:22), how people interpret the universe is demonstrated in their daily activities, relations with fellow humans, and in rites and rituals of avoidance and observations. That is why this study is centred on the African world-sense in general and amaXhosa world-sense particularly. The aim is to cast a spotlight on these world-senses, which were previously relegated, overlooked and dismissed as mythology. Furthermore, Thabede (2008:235) argues that, “the world is differently defined in different places.” The African world-sense is one that reminds us that the world is diverse and that there are different ways of viewing and experiencing the world. An African-centred world-sense is one that refers to an alternative way of viewing or sensing the world and all that is part of that world in a way that emanates from Africa and Africans (Ngara, 2007:10). It is worth resubmitting that this study employs the term “world-sense” instead of “worldview.”

Importantly, this study shows that African world-senses are constantly evolving owing to the influences in transitions between time and events in people's lives (and their daily decisions) (Matoane, 2012:109). African world-senses are not static or rigid. A balance between the recent changes in time as well as in space and the historical events is consciously maintained. Kolawole (1997:35) writes that African belief systems are "predicated on the philosophy of life as a negotiation of values, as a continuum, an intersection between the past, the present and the future." These continuities are also evident in the ritual and practice of *ukukhapha* among amaXhosa which is testament to the everchanging, fluid and flexible nature of both language and culture. "The world is conceived as a negotiation of diverse convictions and so heteroglossia is more valid to African thoughts as opposed to monovocality" (Mkhize, 2021:425). It is this diversity of world-senses that allows African cultures and languages continuities and evolution which have sustained their survival and usage or relevance to their people over time.

Moyo (2004:72) maintains that for the African world-sense, religion plays a central role in the lives of the Africans and there is no separation between religion and the material. This is contrary to the Western worldview as Thabede (2008:235) opines, "it (Western worldview) generally ignores the spiritual dimension of phenomena and focuses on the visible, measurable physical reality." Thabede (2008:235) elaborates by maintaining that "African ontology is concerned with the spiritual world and the forces that play a role in it." Spirituality according to Ngara (2007:11) "encompasses relationships between living souls and the living-dead, self and collective empowerment, humility, metaphysical and psychic powers, healing and wholeness." Central to this study is the element of spirituality as it lays emphasis on the belief system of amaXhosa and why the ancestors remain a central entity in their lives.

Spirituality-centred wisdom has at its core justice and dignity, emphasizing the significance of love, belongingness, compassion in overall life (Ngara, 2007:11). As stated in Chapter One in this study, as a people, contemporary amaXhosa are not a homogenous group of people. They differ in the form of churches that they pledge their loyalties to (as was influenced by missionaries) and whether they practice and believe in African religion or they are both Christian and practice African religion (this was after their encounter with the Western religious imperialism). Amid these differences, there is one similarity that amaXhosa share (apart from language), that there is a God, known as *uMdali* (Creator), *uMenzi* (Maker) or *uThixo* (appellation denoting God) (taken from the Khoi and San languages) (Mtuzze 1999:40).

They believe that *Qamata* (God) is the “blesser” and “punisher” of all things and there is none higher or equal to God.

Mndende (2006) further argues that amaXhosa serve a “genderless God.” This is to say the God of amaXhosa cannot and should not be confined or assigned a gender as God transcends gender and all societal constructs. Mndende (2006) observes that amaXhosa males make claim that it can only be males who can become ancestors, that is why they perform the *ukubuyisa/umbuyiso* (bringing back ritual) ritual for males which they claim facilitates one’s successful transition to becoming an ancestor. Mndende (2006) further maintains that ancestors live in the spirit form, therefore ancestors have no gender, and that gender discrimination has no place in African Traditional Religion (ATR) and the ancestors despise it. The notion of women as passive bystanders was and still is important to the sustainability of a capitalist patriarchal society where women are seen to be playing supportive roles as men’s auxiliaries.

It is through other people that one can claim their humanness as African life is embedded in the centrality of the communal (this is not to say that it does not appreciate the individual and their individual agency). In order to understand the African world-sense, it is critical to understand the principle of *ubuntu*, which maintains that *umntu ngumntu ngabantu* (a person is a person through other people (Menkiti, 1984:171). Dube (2012:129) uses the *Vision 2016* to explain what *ubuntu/ botho* is and explains that it is, “a process for earning respect by first giving it, and to gain empowerment and empowering others.” It is for this reason that in the event of a death of a person who epitomised the principles and values of *ubuntu*, amaXhosa would affirm the deceased’s humanness by exclaiming that, “*ibingumntu ke lo*” (“this was indeed a person”). What sets the African world-sense apart from the Western worldview is that the community defines and affirms a person’s claim to personhood while in the West it is the idea of “some isolated static quality of rationality, will, or memory” explains Menkiti (1984:172). Busia (1955:17) advances this notion of *ubuntu* by arguing that African life respects the individual, as individual differences are respected but are not put at a pedestal higher than the community, because it is the community that affirms one’s claim to belonging to humanity. Thabede (2008:238) ascertains that, “African-centred world-senses are: the connectedness of all things; the spiritual nature of human beings; collective individual identity; the collective/inclusive nature of family structure: the oneness of mind, body and spirit; and the value of interpersonal relationships.” As stated above, the African world-sense is one that is spiritual, as a result, everything and everyone has an important role to play and that role cannot be undermined, as it forms part of a whole entity.

As noted in Chapter One, for the African people in general, and for amaXhosa in particular, value community and rely on communal ties to survive. They thrive in tough times by acting as a collective. It is their ability to act as a community that has allowed them to preserve some of their rituals and practices, so much so that some traces of these rituals, rites of passage and practices have remained till this day (with some changes here and there). Regardless of various Western interventions such as the missionary gospel, colonialism, capitalism, slavery and apartheid in a post 1994 or democratic South Africa - thanks to language use (among other things). AmaXhosa orature which has been passed on from one generation to another was and is still at present the driver of these preservations mentioned above (Kaschula, 2008).

Maseko (2019) and Oyěwùmí (1997) explained that even though Africans may be a colonised people or what Cakata and Ramose (2021) refer to as a ‘conquered people in the wars of dispossession’ - they bring with them their cosmology and traces or evidence of what is embedded in their languages. It is against this backdrop that this study utilises isiXhosa as a source of language as it carries with it the amaXhosa world-sense which shapes and informs their realities. Dube (2012:128) explains that, “the ethics and values of relationships are taught and maintained through role models, proverbs, myths, taboos, laws, songs, myths/legends, ceremonies, and rituals, that continue to underline what is expected as normal and acceptable.”

Conclusion

This Chapter defined the Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis and the world-sense as defined by scholars such as Oyěwùmí (1997), Maseko (2019) and Mndende (2002) with language at the centre. This was achieved through a close examination of the genesis of the SWH and its main tenets, as well as its strong and weak versions. The weak version claims that our thoughts influence how we see the world. However, the strong version claims that language determines thoughts. It posits that people who speak different languages perceive the world differently. Linguistic evidence on *ukukhapha* during death revealed that gender and seniority are not mutually exclusive. The deployment of theoretical lenses such as the world-sense and the Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis steered this point home. IsiXhosa, like the Yoruba language and oral traditions (Oyěwùmí, 1997:32), is a major source of knowledge where the world-sense of amaXhosa is embedded as a reservoir of changes in history and interpreting social structures (Magoqwana, 2019:76; Maseko, 2019:36). The amaXhosa world-sense through *ukukhapha*, permits amaXhosa to experience mourning, hoping to heal, restore and make meaning at an individual and communal level. Furthermore, this Chapter located the SWH within African languages

where its validity was tested. It was concluded that the SWH is also relevant and applicable to African languages which affords this study a better examination between language and the rite of passage as well as the practice of *ukukhapha* during death by amaXhosa. Ultimately, this Chapter cast a spotlight on the collective practice of amaXhosa life which is expressed in *ukukhapha* in their lives and seasons. This has shown that death is no exception, *ukukhapha* is also present and allows both amaXhosa women and men to understand death, thus allow them to gradually come to terms with it and the changes that it brings.

Chapter Four

Research Findings: *Ukukhapha* and the work of public grief

Introduction

This Chapter aims to present four key texts written during different periods across history which define, trace and discuss *ukukhapha* during death, both as a rite of passage for the deceased and as a practice of collective mourning for the living. These key texts are Tiyo Burnside (TB) Soga's *Intlalo kaXhosa* (1974), the three volumes: *The Greater Dictionary of isiXhosa* (1989, 2003 and 2006). Nokuzola Mndende's (2002) PhD thesis entitled *Signifying Practices: AmaXhosa Ritual Speech*; and the memoir of the Media and Marketing personality, Khaya Dlanga (2015) entitled *To Quote Myself*.

The themes that will be discussed in this Chapter are ritual speech (*ukuthetha*) which is accompanied by *inkomo ethethayo* (a cow that speaks)/ *iqegu* in relation to the importance of its symbolic and material value, for both the living and ancestors, death announcement (*ukubika umphanga*), the interconnectedness of gender and seniority during *ukukhapha* and the communal support for the bereaved during mourning and the labour involved which is known as *ukubuyisa izandla*.

4.1 *Ukukhapha* and death euphemisms (*ukuhlonipha*)

It is common practice in African languages not to mention the word "death," and isiXhosa is no exception. Mdleleni-Bookholane, Schoeman and van der Merwe (2004:5) argue that amaXhosa believe that one never refers to a person as "dead," "*ufile*" unless one is ecstatic about the death of the said person. As a result, one can be heard saying that '*ifile le nja*' meaning "this dog is dead". Mndende (2013) attests to this by maintaining that "when somebody has passed on which symbolizes that life is not destroyed but is somewhere else; it is said that the person: *uhambile*: has left; *usishiyile*: has left us; *akasekho*: is not around us but is somewhere else; *uswelekile*: is scarce." These metaphors and euphemisms reflect the sacredness and intimacy of amaXhosa's understanding of death. To them, death is not something that one can talk about without affording it some level of avoidance, dignity and respect. As mentioned in Chapters One and Two, amaXhosa believe that a human being is constituted of the body and spirit. Therefore, when one dies, it is just the spirit leaving the body – it is not the end of life. That is why Solomon (1986:41) explains that for some amaXhosa clans, it is believed that when the spirit leaves the body, it still lingers around the body or the homestead. This is why the

ritual of *ukukhapha* must be performed to *khapha* (accompany) the spirit of the deceased to the spirit world. The rite of passage of *ukubuyisa* is also performed as it allows the living to call unto the spirit of the deceased who is a member of the community of ancestors to assist in matters affecting the living in a spiritual manner only accessible to the ancestors and *Qamata* (the Creator).

4.2 The Greater Dictionary of isiXhosa

The cultural essays contained in the GDX (1989:742) are a collection which details some of amaXhosa rites of passage and rituals which are important to their lifecycle. This collection also details the use of language as an expression of the world-sense of amaXhosa and how these are integral in understanding amaXhosa life and isiXhosa, their language. AmaXhosa, just like most Africans, are known to be a people that value the community and it is through the community that an individual can locate themselves in the grander scheme of things. Within the African context, belonging to a community is ample confirmation that you are alive and living a life worth witnessing, valuing and celebrating (Menkiti, 1984:171). The GDX (2003:50) defines *ukukhaphana* as “*ukupheleka, ukuhamba nomntu ngenjongo yokumchithisa isithukuthezi, ukuncedisana naye, ukumkhusela*” (accompany a person, escort a person as a courtesy or as a guide or protector). The verb *ukukhaphana* is descriptive of the presence of communal living among amaXhosa which is characterized and maintained by reciprocity. *Ukukhapha* is voluntary, the GDX (1989:50) expands by stating that:

ukuba ngowenani kwabo banento abayenzayo kungekho nto ikunyanzelayo, ukuthi abantu xa benza into ufane wenze nawe (join in on something, task or event undertaken by a group of people without being compelled to do so).

The voluntary nature of *ukukhapha* which leads to its reciprocal practice will be discussed in detail in the Dlanga (2015) section extensively.

4.2.1 Ukukhapha as a non-gender specific ritual

The Greater Dictionary of isiXhosa (1989:742) refers to the ritual of *ukukhapha* as *Idini lokukhapha: idini lenkomo yezila*. According to the GDX (1989:742),

Le yinkonzo ethi emva kweenyanga ezintandathu okanye unyaka usokhaya okanye nawuphi umntu onophawu lwakhe kweli khaya, enzelwe yona.

(this is the rite performed from six to twelve months after the death of the head of the household, or a man who owned cattle, to accompany him to the land of the departed ancestors.)

There is a marked difference between the meanings contained in these definitions of *ukukhapha*. The isiXhosa version states that *ukukhapha* is performed for the head of the household who is a man or any men that owned cattle and it goes on to state that this is a rite that is performed for anyone in the household who has the trait or mark of the head of the household. What is puzzling or contentious about the definitions of *ukukhapha* between the isiXhosa definition (which is the source text) and English translation (which is the target text) is that the isiXhosa definition does not use the gender pronoun ‘he’ as isiXhosa does not have gender pronouns. This definition of *ukukhapha*, unlike the English translation does not confine *ukukhapha* to a rite that is performed solely for men but it is open to an interpretation that may include certain women too as women are indeed members of the household who possess the head of the household’s mark/trait. The use of the gender pronoun ‘he’ and the omission of extending *ukukhapha* to other family members gives an impression that the *ukukhapha* rite historically excluded women. Furthermore, the use of this gender pronoun advances the notion that *ukukhapha* as a rite is the prerogative of every men regardless of their social position.

In addition to the fluidity and flexibility embedded in isiXhosa and its openness to accommodating various members of the family in the rite of *ukukhapha*, entry eight of the GDX (2003:50) explains that:

(ukukhapha) ukuzilela umnini-mzi okanye nawuphi na umntu onenxaxheba kwelo khaya ngokuthi kuxhelwe inkabi yenkomo, ngokwamandulo emva kokuba kungcwatywe, kodwa ngokwangoku kwimizi emininzi ngomhla womngcwabo.

(mourn for the head of the household or for some other deserving person by slaughtering an ox; traditionally this was done the day after the funeral, but nowadays it is often slaughtered on the day of the funeral itself).

This definition of *ukukhapha* is inclusive of any member of the family who has a significant role in the homestead, thus not limiting it to men or just the head of the household. The English translation and its rendition of the use of the word ‘deserve’ indicates that the person to whom *ukukhapha* is performed for is someone whose actions dictated that they deserve this rite performed on their behalf when they die.

It is important to understand that the term *umninimzi* is not static. It has evolved over time and has been used to denote that women can be heads of households too. Moropa and

Kruger (1999:76) explain that to refer to the man as the only head of the household is an illustration of sexual bias as the man is not recognized as the only owner of the home. A few isiXhosa terms have undergone semantic shifts to accommodate certain ideologies which privilege certain people over others and *umninimzi* is one of such terms. This implies that this rite of passage is only rendered to one who has accomplished and reached all the stages of their life cycle and whose service within their communities spoke for itself while they were alive (physically).

It is also important to note that there are distinct groups of males who are not eligible for this rite of passage. With this understanding, this study submits that *ukukhapha* is not steeped in a specific gender unlike the English translation contained in the GDX (1989:742) which makes it appear to be. This maintains that gender and seniority for amaXhosa during *ukukhapha* as a rite and practice are not mutually exclusive. This does not mean amaXhosa culture is not patriarchal.

This study does not claim that amaXhosa women and men are regarded as equal or enjoy equal treatment in society just because isiXhosa does not have gender pronouns. Rather, it suggests that amaXhosa women and men practice *ukukhapha* differently and this helps us understand how this shapes the manner in which amaXhosa speak about death. By relying on linguistic evidence to unpack amaXhosa world-sense, this study proves that language “is the lens through which they (its speakers) construct their ideas, beliefs and thoughts about the world around them” (Maseko, 2019). This also corroborates the strong version of the SHW which advances that people who speak different languages perceive the world differently and this is the case in the language of death and *ukukhapha* which allows amaXhosa, like most Africans to see death as a transitional process from the physical realm into the spiritual realm instead of an extermination of life.

4.2.2 Iqegu: the ox that speaks (*Inkomo ethethayo*)

As mentioned above, the beast usually an ox, (which is the head or the household’s favourite beast) is slaughtered to accompany the deceased as an integral part of *ukukhapha*. What is even more important about this beast is that it should not be any ordinary cattle, but must be fit for the purpose. The GDX (1989:742) explains that, “*kuye kuwe inkomo, iyincakasane okanye enkulu ukuba indoda le ibifuyile*” (“the deceased’s (a man) favourite ox or, failing this, any other suitable ox is slaughtered for the purpose”). This ox serves as a an escort for the spirit of the deceased as they morph into an ancestor. This ox also facilitates a transition from the

physical to the spiritual world. For the deceased, the ox marks one's graduation to the next level of life in the spirit realm. Bongela (2001:50) alluded to this practice in Chapter One of this research.

An ox that is slaughtered for the *ukukhapha* rite is also known as *inkomo ethethayo* (an ox/beast that speaks) (Mndende 2002). By slaughtering this ox, messages are conveyed in the form of *ukuthetha* (ritual speech) where an elder male of the family or community speaks to the ancestral spirits as if he is speaking to the living. He will ask that the deceased's way is paved and accepted into the community of ancestors who dwell in this realm (Mndende 2002).

4.3 Tiyo Burnside Soga's *Intlalo kaXhosa*

In his book *Intlalo kaXhosa*, Tiyo (TB) Soga (1974) appeals to amaXhosa not to deviate from their traditional ways of living and their communalism which were built on the foundation of ubuntu. They have to safeguard and preserve their traditions as well as customs which forged close ties with the community of both the living and the living-dead (Mbiti, 1969) or their ancestors. It is critical to acknowledge that Soga (1974) extracts some of his information from the Bible to draw parallels between the amaXhosa life and the biblical era and experiences. In so doing, he records the ways amaXhosa used to mourn (among other things) which was sealed with the slaughtering of a beast which signalled cleansing and an approval from the ancestors accompanied with the ritual speech or *ukuthetha*. According to Soga (1974:124):

ngokwesiko labaNtsundu bekuxhelwa inkomo ekuthiwa yeyezila likabani ofileyo, kukhunjulwa oko kufa kwakhe. Le nto ibisebenzelwa umninimzi yedwa, ingeyiyo noko yona inkosikazi kwanabantwana bomfi.

[According to *isiNtu* or the culture of *Ntsundu* people (amaXhosa culture in this context) an ox which was designated to mark the mourning of a certain person's death was slaughtered, this was done to mark the commemoration of his death. This is a rite that was performed solely for the head of the household, it was not performed for his wife or children.]

Soga (1974:124) unlike the GDX (2003:50) clarifies that this was an ox slaughtered for the head of the household which excluded his wife and children. This exhibits that in Soga's time, there were certain rites of passage which were performed solely for men.

He further continues to elaborate by stating that:

Inkomo yezila ke ngoko ibiphantsi komcimbi omkhulu kunene weenkolo-nkolo zasemanyangeni. Kumaxesha esinawo ngoku abantu benza amatye amangcwaba ngenkonzo nentetho zebali lomfi njalonjalo.

[The mourning beast that was slaughtered for mourning was a very important rite according to ancestral beliefs. These days people erect tombstones as graves where a ceremony is held and where an obituary is read, and so forth and so forth.]

Soga (1974: 198-199) argues that this ox known as *iqegu* (singular) was the head of the household's prized ox as he used it as his transport which no one else would use. This ox did not perform the normal labour that other beats performed such as ploughing. He goes on to state that this was the head of the household's racing ox, as historically it was common practice among amaXhosa to host ox races instead of the contemporary popular horse races (Soga 1974:199). This was no ordinary ox, it was his pride and joy, almost as important to the owner as his eldest child. Soga (1974) states that:

Wofika selehombe watsho wasisicibala esi, selelixhasoba elikhohlwe nakukuhamba oku, engasanyatheli selecondoba etsho nqe ngelo chaza lihle kunene libhanjwathiweyo lingasahlalwa mpukane (ngabula Mfu. C. Koti) etsho ngomxhaka engalweni pha, egangxe ingxowa yokutshaya yalo mngxu wenqawa yesiXhosa elahlwe ngokufane kusukelwane naba fingxo nonerhi beenqawa zasemLungwini, sithetha leya bekusithiwa nguMngcongo kowayo.

[The head of the household would be a sight for sore eyes with his luxurious look, so much so that it would seem as if he does not know how to walk as he would take his time walking to complement his lavish look, with his ivory bracelet, along with his tobacco bag on his shoulder and smoking pipe known as Mngcongo which was of higher quality and different from those of the white person.]

This picture of the male head of the household which is painted by Soga (1974:199) is reproduced when he is buried as it symbolizes his continued life in the ancestral realm. Therefore, it is the world-sense of amaXhosa that in the afterlife, one does not cease to work. That is why amaXhosa would accompany the spirit of the deceased with messages from the physical world to the spirit world, which they hope will materialize into good fortune and health in the physical realm.

Soga (1974:124) proved that people have adopted various ways to commemorate and memorialize the passing of their loved ones. The erection of tombstones is one of those adaptations to commemorate their loved ones. What is evident here is that *ukukhapha* evolved beyond what was historically performed by amaXhosa and this marks the continuity of this rite of passage. This ability to adapt signals the fluidity of language and culture. It portrays that this duo is dynamic and not static as they change to fit people's thoughts, contexts and requirements. Needless to say, this change and transition is subject to external events and external influences which could be a result of their encounters with different cultures and could be a consequence of the changes that people themselves want to effect, thus forging new

customs. These new customs are reflective of the changing nature of language and culture, thus Ntshingana (2019) maintains that, “like a living entity, words develop and grow.”

4.3.1 *Umphanga*: death announcement

The announcement of death for amaXhosa is an important exercise. It is handled with sensitivity as it is instrumental in rallying them to support the bereaved during their mourning period. Soga (1974:123) states that, “*xa kufike umphanga izithunywa ziligqibe lonke*” (“upon the advent of the announcement of death, messengers travel wide and far to make the announcement”). Soga (1974:123) makes it clear that an announcement of death is critical and it should be announced to *Komkhulu* (Royal Palace). Failure to do so is a punishable offence which could cost those who failed to inform the Royal Palace a cow or two. *Ukubikwa komphanga* historically allowed people to organize and schedule their daily activities that allowed them time and resources to help the bereaved. Soga (1974:198) further explains that:

Ekubeni uphalazekile umphanga izwe lonke ngezithunywa nolwandile lweendaba ezithwala nangamahamba-nandlela, zobetha umngcelele nomtyilo izihlobo eziza kukhuza nokubeka ilitye zixananaze ixesha zivela kumacala ngamacala neenkalo ngeenkalo.

[After the announcement of death, the entire community through messengers and travellers, would make their way to the home of the bereaved to offer their condolences and lay stones on the grave of the deceased from all over the country.]

This collective mourning as stated in Chapters One and Two in this study is evidence that indeed historically, amaXhosa practiced *ukukhapha* during death. Various groups of people would then make their way to the home of the bereaved to help out with anything they needed help with, especially the funeral arrangements. This is known as *ukuvela* (see Jimlongo 2020) which entails showing up at the home of the deceased prior to or after the funeral to offer condolences, support and practical labour as there are a number of tasks that have to be attended to prior, during and after the funeral. It is important to note that *ukuvela* and *ukukhapha* may be similar in practice but what sets them apart is that *ukukhapha* is more elaborate and longer than *ukuvela*. *Ukuvela* is usually done in a day to express to the bereaved family that they have heard about their loss, while *ukukhapha* takes place as soon as the death is announced until the burial.

The same can be said with contemporary amaXhosa where it is evident that technological inventions and innovations have taken over. Fine examples of such inventions are the cell phone, social media and radio shows such as the Umhlobo Wenene FM weekday

announcements of deaths called *Imiphanga*. Soga (1974:198) also noticed that in his time, *ukubikwa komphanga* had been spread by technological interventions. He observed that:

Inkqubo engaphele ndawo ke leyo ngangobubanzi nobuninzi bezihlobo kula maxesha angoku enqubela yaseNtshonalanga imiphanga, namazila, nemibulelo yawo kubafelwa abashulekileyo bambatha izandla entloko, ihamba ngeleta neengcingo neetelefoni eziqhutywa yimphundulu yombane (kanti impundulu le inomsebenzi omhle kangaka elizweni).

[These days the announcement of death, condolences and the mourning period is disseminated through letters, telephone calls which are connected to the invisible power of electricity (who would have known that this invisible creature/ lightning bird serves a good purpose in the country).]

These new technological interventions have played a central role in dispatching important news to people in different places particularly the *ukubikwa komphanga* (death announcement) as it allows people to make the necessary arrangements to *khapha* (accompany) the bereaved and the deceased. In showing his (Soga 1974:198) gratitude for these technological advancements in the media he notes that:

Nangokukhutshwa kumaphepha endaba zeziMvo zabaNtsundu zikaMhleli Jabavu nabanye abahleli abadumileyo bamaphephandaba kaNtu. Lithe ke eli thuba lihle labaluleka kuba libeluncedo olukhulu kubafelwa izihoyana eziselusizini nasekuhlungisekeni okungathethekiyo, begqutyuthelwe lilifu elimnyama lezila likakufa wena ulutshaba kwiinto zonke ezinobomi.

[The publication in newspapers such as *iMvo zabaNtsundu* by the editor Jabavu and other famous Black newspaper editors. This is an important opportunity and initiative because it is of great importance to the bereaved who are in emotional turmoil due to the dark cloud hovering them that is death and mourning which are enemies to all living beings.]

Newspapers such as *iMvo zabaNtsundu* edited by Jabavu and other black newspapers which used African languages just like Soga (1974) in their publications played a central role in keeping black people informed of what happened to their loved ones. These ways of *ukubika umphanga* have gone to shape the way *umphanga* is announced and have saved people a lot of time in informing their communities about such news and continue to be useful in contemporary times. Furthermore, Soga (1974:198) encourages the readers to send their *imiphanga* into these newspapers as he acknowledged that they are integral in the building and maintenance of communal ties among black people, especially amaXhosa.

In commemorating the death of a person, particularly an important person such as a king, Soga (1974:124) reports that;

xa kubekwa ilitye engcwabeni phaya kumana kuthethwa kusithiwa, “Hamba kakuhle. Uze ube usikhonzela phambili apho. Siyeza siyakulandela. Uzusikhumbule nalapho uyakhona”.

[when a stone is placed on the grave, people would speak and say, “Farewell. Send our regards to the ones who dwell at the final resting place. We are also on our way. Remember us where you are going”].

Speaking to the spirit of the deceased is an act for validating the presence of the ancestors for amaXhosa as it is an expression of their world-sense which does not see the physical and spirit worlds as independent of each other, rather they are interdependent.

As Mndende (2002) reveals in this Chapter, *ukuthetha* (ritual speech) is very important for amaXhosa as it carries with it the living’s aspirations and warm wishes. They believe that by speaking, healing and good fortunes will be in abundance and that the ancestors approve of the performance of that ritual. By speaking, amaXhosa are conveying a message to the deceased which will accompany her/him to the spirit world where it will be received by the community of ancestors. Cakata and Ramose (2021: 07) claim that by performing ritual speech, it is an affirmation that the message has been received in the spiritual realm. This belief system or expression of amaXhosa world-sense through language is tantamount to the claims made by the Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis which state that language mirrors the world-sense of its speakers.

In Chapter Three, this study revealed that according to the world-sense of amaXhosa, there is no bifurcation between the visible (physical) and the invisible (spiritual) worlds. It further affirmed that this relationship is connected by the ritual speech and the slaughtering of an animal, usually an ox, cow or goat. These days, even a sheep is regarded as a sacrificial “beast”. The brewing of *umqombothi* (African beer made from fermented maize) is one of the apparatuses utilised to facilitate this interconnectedness even though in certain instances and homes, it is usually omitted. This is also usually the case in *ukukhapha* even though this is dependent on the household performing it (GDX 1989). The libation and drinking of *umqombotho* signals that there is a shared drink between the living and the ancestors. That is why the living would be informed by the *amagqirha* (diviners) that *izinyanya zinxaniwe* (the ancestors are thirsty) (Mndende 2002). The living would brew it and serve the ancestors by pouring some of the *mqombothi* on the ground. This is usually poured in the cattle kraal as it is considered by amaXhosa to be a sacred space where the ancestors dwell. The beer is poured

while amaXhosa perform ritual speech or *thetha* with the ancestors in the presence of the living, informing them what the *mqombothi* is for (Mndende, 2002).

4.3.2 “*Ofelweyo uyahlaliswa*”: seniority and gender specific accompanying

According to Soga (1974:113), “*ofelweyo uyahlaliswa ngabanye bamlalise angabi nasithukuthezi ngokuthi nkcwe yedwa*” (The bereaved is kept company by a group of people who will ensure that she/he does not sit alone with the loneliness brought by death). Soga (1974:113) further explains that people, usually relatives and neighbours would leave their own homes to temporarily sojourn with the bereaved, where they would assist with the day-to-day operations at the home of the bereaved as the bereaved continue mourning. This is known as *ukukhunga*. He explains that:

kanti wobabona xa bakhunge umkhuhlane wofayo. Ufike bencame amakhaya nezilili zabo, sebelala apha kuloo mntu, kubuthiwe kubaliswa amavo, sekulalwa ndawonye ngaba bantu bokufelana, abebengahambi nokusebenzela intlawulo nokubhatalwa oku ngomnye eligazi lakho nje, hayi.

[*you will see them as they keep company the one looking after an ailing person. They would temporarily leave their homes, and spend nights keeping company the one looking after an ailing person, this is where they would stay there reminiscing on their recollection of yester years, they would sleep in one place as people who support each other during the mourning period, they did not aspect any financial remuneration as they provided this assistance as if helping out a family member/relative.*]

Soga (1974:113) emphasises that all this labour was free and people did this without expecting financial remuneration. Within the world-sense of amaXhosa, these acts of service are akin to the assistance one would provide their own relatives and this is reciprocated. Usually the female relatives of the bereaved would temporarily move into the home of the bereaved (for up to two weeks or more so that they could attend to the spiritual, practical and economic needs of the bereaved). This was work that people did out of the goodness of their hearts as it is a reflection and the core of the amaXhosa communal world-sense which prioritizes the community over any economic profits which might dictate one’s importance in a capitalist society (Soga 1974:113).

Historically, amaXhosa were buried along with certain objects that they believed were going to be useful to the deceased as he assumes his role as an ancestor. Soga (1974:122) recalled that when the head of the household was buried, he would be buried with his smoking pipe, his supply of tobacco, a grass/reed mat (*ukhuko*), his spear, his axe and some other such small paraphernalia. Soga explains that:

qonda ke yinkolo yasemaXhoseni yovuko le lwabafileyo neyentlalo kwelizayo iphakade. Apho wofika agawule abiyele iinkomo zakhe uthango etshaya icuba lakhe umnumzana kukuhle kuisisisi njengezolo.

[Understand that this is the world-sense or belief of amaXhosa about the afterlife. This is where the head of the household, where he will build a kraal (using the axe he was buried with) for his herd of cattle and would be smoking his pipe as if it were yester years.]

To understand this world-sense is to equally conceptualise that to the amaXhosa (like most African communities) the ancestors are treated with utter respect as it is believed that they have gone to live in another world - the ancestral realm where they will still perform their duties as if they lived in the physical world (this was alluded to earlier in Chapter One). Likewise, Ngubane (2004:174) reports that among amaZulu “the head of the house is given some seeds to take along to the new world.” Soga (1974:122) further engages with this practice among amaXhosa by highlighting its significance, thus:

uthi ke wena amazenjana nengxowa yebhokhwe yimpahla yokwenzani na nyaka wuphi? Bekukholelwa eminyanyeni namashologu, imimoya yabantu abadala baloo mzi kusithiwa isijongile ilambile, iyacela. Icela ukuba kunuke mnandi ekhaya apha.

[*what do you think the axes and bags made out of goat skins are for? They (traditional amaXhosa) believed in their ancestors, it was believed that the spirits of the elders of the homestead were looking over the home as they (ancestors) are hungry, are pleading. They request that the home is filled with succulent aromas.*]

Soga (1974:122) explains that the tools and paraphernalia that one was traditionally buried with, which among other things included axes, bags made out of goat skins to store tobacco and spears were instrumental in assisting the ancestor to do his work. The ancestor would not only prepare a place for the living in the ancestral realm but would also protect and guide them over spirits that may seek to harm the living. This is a demonstration of the amaXhosa world-sense which maintains that there is life after death and that death in itself is not the end of life but a continuation of life in another realm.

Soga (1974:123) further posits that the spiritual realm is one that requires the ancestors to be ‘fed’ and this is done through the slaughtering of a sacrificial beast, whose bones will be ceremoniously burnt (see the GDX 1989:739 for *ukutshiswa kwamathambo* (the burning of the bones). The ancestors are further fed and appeased through the brewing of traditional beer known as *umqombothi* (see the GDX 1989:747-748 for *utywala bomzi* (the home’s home-brewed beer). The libation of *umqombothi* is always accompanied with *ukuthetha* which sets the tone for the significance of a specific ritual which is articulated to both the living and the ancestors. This aroma is said to be pleasant to the ancestors along with the blood of an ox that

will be spilt through its slaughter. Thus, the ox will bellow signalling to the living that the ancestors are indeed pleased with the execution of this ritual and the elders would in response say “*icamagu livumile, makudede ubumnyama kuvele ukukhanya, makube njalo*” which loosely translated mean “the *camagu* approves, may the darkness make way for light and let it be so” (Mndende 2002 as discussed in the following section of this Chapter).

Mbiti (1969:151) like Soga (1974), observed that in the amaNdebele culture, the deceased is also buried with a few items. He explains that:

Personal belongings are buried with the body to accompany the deceased man, so that he does not find himself poor in the hereafter: these things are part of him, and he must not be robbed by the surviving relatives (or else he will visit them and demand what is his own). The animal killed afterwards serves, as it is called, to ‘accompany’ the deceased, to provide him with food on the way and livestock in the next world.

The correlation between amaXhosa and amaNdebele’s understanding of death is proof that there are similarities in people’s perception of the world. People’s perceptions are influenced and shaped by the languages that they speak which corresponds with the weak version of the SWH as discussed in Chapter Three.

Comparing and contrasting historical burial practices and how amaXhosa (during Soga’s time 1917 as this book is estimated to have been published in 1931) have adapted Christian ways of burial he (Soga) noted that:

Kwaye kumaXhosa abaNtsundu basezikolweni sekungcwatywa ngokwasemLungwini ngemikhoba, umntu athungelwe amalaphu amhlophe, umkhoba ugqunywe ngamnyama. Kude kuthiwe tyaba umnqamalezo omhlophe ngaphezulu, kuhlokome nendumiso yoPhezulu eNyangweni.

[The educated amaXhosa have adopted Western burial practices, this is where the deceased will have white cloths stitched together for them, and the coffin will be covered in black. A white cross is erected on top of the grave, and a church service exalting the Supreme one will be conducted].

This form of burial has been adopted as the norm among contemporary amaXhosa, thus, various practices which were historically normalized have been eradicated. Soga (1974:124) observed that:

’Ze noko umntu angafumane axinaniswe nazonka, namipu, namali nanto zinjalo, koko aphelekelwe ngemimoya yabathandazi benene, bevathe ezimnyama nezimnyama zezila zingasenambola yanto.

[A person would not have their coffin stuffed with bread, guns, money and things of that nature; therefore, this person would be accompanied by the spirit of prayer that the

converts would send them off with, their mourning clothes would be black and these would-be black clothes without the ochre.]

As one would note that indeed amaXhosa Christians adopted several practices and tools which were common in the West, such as guns and money as noted by Soga (1974:124). Furthermore, this affirms that there had been a change in paraphernalia that would traditionally accompany the deceased into the spiritual realm such as axes, spears and tobacco as noted by Soga (1974:123), but the principle has not changed as the gun and the money symbolize that the ‘new’ ancestor will have to protect their kraal using a gun as they would with a spear. Perhaps, the money was meant to be used when they engage in trade with other ancestors who used money as their currency. Nonetheless, the role of the ancestor to continue working and building in the spiritual realm had not yet been eroded. The mourning attire has also changed from the clothes that would be dyed with ochre, usually red ochre, to black clothes, especially for the widow. Prayers and hymns officiated by a Preacher or Pastor have become the order of the day at most of amaXhosa Christian funerals.

Soga (1974:124) also states that different groups of the heterogenous traditional amaXhosa had different ways of burying their kings. He states that amaMpondomise would bury their kings in the river (see A.C. Jordan’s (1940) *Ingqumbo Yeminyanya*) and this river would not be crossed by amaMpondomise women as this would constitute a part of their *ukuhlonipha* practice (custom of respect). This practice is also found among amaZulu even though this practice may not be limited to members of the royal clan. Ngubane (200:174) explains that, “if someone dies in the water other members of the family will not be allowed to swim to avoid death.” Avoiding certain landmarks such as rivers is one of the African people’s ways of respecting death and also being cognisant of their belief that death is a form of contamination which can be cleansed through the performance of vital rituals such as *ukukhapha*, *ukuzila* and *ukubuyisa*.

4.4 Nokuzola Mndende’s PhD thesis: *Signifying Practices: amaXhosa Ritual Speech*

4.4.1 “*Ukukhapha wena sisithi ndlela-ntle*”: *Ukukhapha* and ritual speech

Ritual speech or *ukuthetha* (Mndende, 2002) as a mode of communication, with both the living and the living-dead is used to affirm the successful execution of this transition that comes with death (physical life to spiritual life). According to Mndende (2002: iii) “*ukuthetha*, or ritual speech, is the medium linking the physical and the spiritual world within the amaXhosa

worldview.” This illustrates that the amaXhosa world-sense recognizes not only the visible but equally recognizes the invisible as alluded to throughout this study. Mndende (2002:06) further affirms that “amaXhosa believe that constant communication with departed relatives brings holistic healing to their lives and their environment.” It lies at the heart of amaXhosa religion (Mndende, 2002: iii). To understand the interconnectedness of life and death according to amaXhosa belief system, it is critical to acknowledge that they (amaXhosa) understand death to be one’s elevation to another form of life. The finality of death for amaXhosa symbolizes one’s complete journey or physical life cycle, that is why amaXhosa would claim that *umzamo omhle uwuzamile* (your beautiful efforts are complete) when bidding farewell to a deceased. Mndende (2002:17) maintains that for the amaXhosa world-sense “all forms of ritual speech reinforce the belief that the soul is considered to be immortal that is why death is seen as a path an individual has to take in order to get to the world of the ancestors.” Bongela (2001:53) attests to this by adding that, “during the slaughtering of the *nzila* beast, words of reverence such as these are uttered:

Kuyintlonelo nembeko enkulu ukuba sihlabe wena Bhayilam ngenjongo yokuba sikhaphe umnininzi weli khaya, uSpokojane into kaVelem. Nantso ke Cekwane inkabi esiyikhuphayo ukukhapha wena sisithi ndlela-ntle.

[It is with deep respect that we have chosen to sacrifice you Bhayilam as a symbol of respect to accompany the head of this family, Spokojane Velem. Cekwane, accept, with pleasure, this beast which we are slaughtering on your behalf. Farewell to you.]

Mndende (2002:55) further explains that, “the speaker needs to be knowledgeable of the nature of the ritual as s/he is responsible for communicating the purpose of the ritual to the ancestors and to the community.” Therefore, the ritual speech transcends the physical realm as amaXhosa believe that ancestors are complete members of the physical realm even though they exist in the spiritual world. The *ukukhapha* rite of passage also informs the deceased who is to join her/his ancestors about the important role she/he is expected to play as an ancestor of the home and the children of that home. The GDX (1989: 742) states that:

Injongo yesi sizathu kukubonakalisa ukhathazelelo lokumenzela iimfanelo zakhe umfi xa kusithiwa ndlela ntle kolo hambo lwakhe lumsa enyangweni, ekhatshwa ngemiphefumlo neminqweno emihle.

(The objective of this ceremony is to accompany the deceased to the realm of those who preceded him, to acquaint him with and to have him accepted by, them and to have him installed as patron and guardian of his family).

J.H. Soga (1931:320) in Lee (2012:206) adds that amaXhosa usually speak to the departed by uttering words or messages such as, “*uze usikhumbule apho uya kona*” (“remember us in a

good way from the place to which you have gone”). Ritual speech can also be seen as a form of *ukukhapha*. These words are meant to accompany the spirit of the deceased to the ancestral realm to convey the wishes and aspirations of the living to the community of ancestors that the deceased will join and continue living by also preparing a place for the living when it is their time to join the ancestors. Mndende (2002:58) explains that, “during sacrificing, words transform the ritual environment into a spiritual world where the participants forget that death has separated them from their deceased relative.” It is against this backdrop that ritual speech is very crucial for amaXhosa, as it has a prophylactic effect on the living. It seals the completion of the ritual and thus, completes the dialogue between the living and the ancestors.

Ritual speech is done by specific people at specific times with specific objects; ritual speech takes places at numerous places and occasions. Mndende (2002:06) explains that, “this communication is mostly characterized by *ukuthetha* (speaking), verbal and non-verbal-communication that could be manifested in both metaphorical and symbolic means through objects/animals or any other means that ancestors find suitable as their objects of communication.” The living address the departed as if they exist in the physical realm regardless of the fact that they now dwell in the spiritual realm. This is done to signal a mutual dependence between the living and the departed or ancestors. Moreover, Mndende (2002:91) further elucidates that ritual speech which is executed through such terms as *camagu* as an affirmation and a bridge connecting the living and the living-dead through speech. She expands by stating that, “*camagu* is the means through which the living can articulate respect for the ancestors and recognition of their power with both the physical and spiritual worlds which, ultimately stem from *Qamata* (Creator)”, Mndende (2002:91). This dialogue between the ancestors and the living is mutually beneficial for all the stakeholders involved and sustains an amicable relationship. Mndende (2002:28) also posits that words create a feeling of inclusion and unity among the audience or all the people present at the performance of the ritual. That is why *ukukhapha* is as important for the departed as it is important for the living. This also includes friends, colleagues and neighbours present to assist and witness the *ukukhapha* ritual.

Mndende (2002) maintains that ritual speech also manifests itself in the bellowing of the beast as the *intlabi* (a senior male member who is selected to be the head of the household) passes the ritual spear on its neck. AmaXhosa according to Mndende (2002:46) are also of the view that ‘*xa ingakhalanga iyayekwa*’ (‘if it does not bellow, it is freed’). Failing to bellow means that the ancestors did not accept the sacrifice, therefore the animal has to be released and not slaughtered, according to Sebe (1982:47) in Mndende (2002:46). This is a

communication break down between the ancestors and the living which requires an inquiry. When the beast bellows, it is a sign that the ancestors have accepted and approved of the ritual and the sacrifice of the beast (Mndende 2002:39). The living will make the utterance that ‘*icamagu livumile*’ (‘*icamagu* has agreed/ approved’) (Mndende 2002:45; Solomon 1986:44). Sebe (1982:44) in Mndende (2002:47) maintains that the term “*camagu* is used during rituals pertaining to birth, bringing back the deceased (*umbuyiso*), accompanying the deceased (*ukukhapha*) and when offering a gift to an ancestor.”

There are various meanings attached to the term *camagu* and what it represents. Therefore, one understanding of the term cannot epitomize the meaning and purpose of the use of *camagu* during rituals, as it depends on the context it is used in. This meaning cannot be subjected to a straight-jacketed approach. *Camagu* can also be understood as an expression of joy,” posits Mndende (2002:47) like Gcingca-Ndolo (2008:13-14). Furthermore, Mndende (2002:90) explains that, “*camagu* is very important as it is a form of ritual speech which is believed to have originated in the realm of the ancestors and therefore uttering it constitutes a call to the spiritual world of the ancestors.” It is also against this backdrop that Mndende (2002:90) maintains that this term (*camagu*) has “spiritual power and occupies the most important place in Xhosa religious practice.” In the event that the animal does not bellow, it is the responsibility of the living to consult an *igqirha* (diviner) who will inform them of the reason things did not go according to plan and must do what they can to make amends with the ancestors (Solomon 1986:44).

4.4.2 Uze usikhumbule (remember us): gender and status specific ritual speech

In her doctorate, Mndende (2002) centres ritual speech or *ukuthetha* as an important component of amaXhosa spirituality and ritual performance. She does this by not limiting *ukuthetha* to amaXhosa but broadly Africans as this is also practiced elsewhere in Africa and South Africa. Furthermore, Mndende (2002:124) states that the *umphanga* or *ukubika* (announcement of death) is exclusively done by the elders and that the moment of *ukubika umphanga* marks the beginning of the mourning period in that particular homestead. It is vital that *umphanga* is made by an elder as it requires sensitivity and empathy for the people informed of a death and may lead to uncontrollable shock which might require medical attention in some instances.

When an elderly person among amaXhosa feels that he/she is about to depart, they usually do what is called *ukuyolela* which means that the elder would leave instructions for the living to continue with his/her legacy (Mndende, 2002:119-120). Mndende (2002:120)

explains that, “the living are bound to fulfil any obligations expressed by a person on their deathbed as she/he is regarded as being in a state of transition to the spiritual world.” It is the responsibility of the living to see to it that these wishes are honoured and fulfilled. Mndende (2002:121) further explains that *ukuyolela* is not limited to an elder or terminally ill person on their deathbed but may be made by a healthy and relatively young person as their aim would be to ensure that people who remain after she or he has departed are familiar with their wishes and instructions. She further states that *ukuyolela* is also accompanied by *ukuyala* (admonishment) for the living to offer guidelines as to how the deceased would like certain things to be carried out (Mndende 2002:122). It is believed that if the wishes of the deceased are not executed by the living, they will face a lifetime of misery (see A.C. Jordan’s 1940, *Ingqumbo Yeminyanya*).

There is another form of ritual speech that a person makes before he/she dies. Mndende (2002:122) refers to this as *ukumpola* (to confess evil deeds). This is usually performed by an evil person who believes that they will not be accepted into the ancestral realm and the person making the confessions usually apologises to the people he/she wronged during his/her lifetime (Mndende 2002:122). Gxekwa and Satyo (2017:161) also explain that, “*ukumpola* is a term used to refer to someone revealing all their dirty/evil secrets before he/she dies.” In describing *ukumpola*, Mndende (2002:122) gives the impression that it is done by both men and women as she uses the pronouns “he/she” for the persons who confess their evil deeds before dying. Gxekwa and Satyo (2017:161) on the other hand, reveal that *ukumpola* is usually done by older women who are believed to be witches and is a form of hallucination. AmaXhosa are of the view that people, particularly senior people, ought to leave the physical world having revealed their wishes and ask for forgiveness for their wrong deeds so as to have a successful transition into the spiritual realm.

Mndende (2002:127-128) reports that the ritual speech is also performed when a deceased is buried as the living would make pleas and bid them farewell with *amazwi amkhaphayo* (words to accompany the deceased). These words of admonition (*ukuyala*), usually performed by elderly male family or community members, serve as reminders to the deceased of their responsibilities to the living. Mndende (2002:128) also explains that *ukuyala* depends on the status and gender of the deceased as a married deceased would be reminded to look after the spouse and children left behind as he/she would become an ancestor, whereas an unmarried deceased without children would not be admonished about looking after a spouse or

children. This form of ritual speech is meant to strengthen the bond between the living and the ancestors. Mndende (2002:144) asserts that:

ritual speech within the context of death, helps the living cope with the loss of the loved one while simultaneously reminding them of the advantage of having a clan member looking after the living in a powerful manner than when s/he was physically with them.

Lastly, Mndende (2002:129) like Soga (1974:122), affirms that, the deceased is buried with items or paraphernalia that they believe will be significant in the ancestral realm - words are spoken to convey this to the spirit of the deceased. Here is an example of this ritual speech:

Kuqala kuphoswe ingxowa yakhe kuthiwe, 'Nantso ingxowa yakho, hamba ugcine zonke izinto zakho; kuphoswe idosha kuthiwe, 'Hamba kakuhle unganqanqatheki endleleni mfondini ukwazi ukutshaya apho uthe waphumla khona; kuphoswe isikhwili kuthiwe, 'Naso isikhali sakho ukuze ukwazi ukuzilwela endleleni apho uthe wahlangana khona notshaba.'

[They start by throwing a sack in and it is said, "Here is your sack, go and store your belongings in it"; then a lighter is thrown in and said, "Travel well and do not crave tobacco due to running out of it on your way, you must be able to smoke on your journey"; then a weapon is thrown in and it is said, "here is your weapon so that you are able to defend yourself in the event that you encounter the enemy."]

This form of ritual speech signifies the continued work required of an ancestor as amaXhosa are of the view that the difference between the physical world and the spiritual world is that one is visible and the other is invisible.

4.5 Khaya Dlanga's *To Quote Myself*

In Chapter Two of his memoir, Khaya Dlanga (2015) details his recollection of the days leading to his father's funeral, Zandisile Dlanga, who died when he was only five years old. From his memories of these days (beginning of the mourning period) and the funeral, he observed that for amaXhosa, *ukukhapha* during death is public communal grief shared among the family and community where chores are delegated to certain groups of people so that there is some sort of relief to the bereaved. This helped with the easing of the load they carry during the mourning period which is further exacerbated by the funeral arrangements and the costs that are coupled with it. Particular attention is paid to children by the elders by giving them much attention for

them not to notice that a member of their family is no longer in their midst. Dlanga (2015:11) reminisces by retelling this memory that:

even though I imagine the mood was sombre after my father died, I never really felt it. The grown-ups made it their mission to make sure that I never felt it. My grandmother's house was filled with people I didn't know, and they all seemed to pay more attention to me than usual.

With all these activities in the home of the bereaved, they set the tone for everyone in attendance to act accordingly by helping out in any way possible. This form of labour was disseminated across various groups of people. This will be discussed in detail in the following section.

The Chief mourner, in this case was Dlanga's mother, Nonceba Boyce, whose new marital name was Nokwakha (see Zungu and Maphini 2020) assumed this role to mourn the death of Dlanga's father, who was legally her husband but had abandoned her and their children before he died. The widow along with other women, usually her maternal relatives and senior women would sit with her on the mattress or mat to comfort her, to attend to her needs and to keep her company. Dlanga (2015:11) reminisces that, there was no furniture as it had all been removed to make space for many mattresses and to accommodate the female mourners who sat with my mother during this time." This community of female mourners make it their mission to remind the bereaved, especially the widow that her grief is shared among this community of female mourners. They do this to remind her and symbolize protection and solidarity during tough times.

Dlanga (2015:11) further describes his mother's condition during this period, "my mother was on one of these mattresses, and either lay on her side or propped herself up against the wall." She had to substitute her normal clothes for the black dress, *doek* (headscarf) and shoes. Basically, everything she wore had to be black to mark her mourning. These clothes are known as *impahla yezila* or *impahla yokuzila* (mourning regalia) (see Jimlongo 2021, Ngqangweni 2013). Furthermore, this mourning regalia is accompanied by a change in behaviour where the widow must not draw too much attention to herself. This is to say that she should speak in a lower register, not to spend too much time outside of the homestead, not visiting other homesteads etc. Like a typical widow, Dlanga's (2015:12) mother had to abide by these rules.

During the mourning period, women from the community (as mentioned above) ensure that they do not leave the widow by herself. Dlanga (2015:12) also noticed that "sometimes

my aunt would sit next to her; at other times, it would be one of my grandmothers. She was never left alone. There were at least five other people in the room with her.” Soga (1974:113) also observed that the bereaved were always in the company of *abakhungi* (people who would spend time sitting with the bereaved). This affirms that there are certain aspects of *ukukhapha* during death which were historically practiced that are still being practiced to this very day - *ukukhunga* is an illustration of this continuity.

Like Soga (1974:113), Dlanga (2015:12) realised that, “when she (his mother) needed to go to the outhouse, there were always people two people accompanying her, as if they were helping an old, sickly woman. She took tiny steps, as if every single step she took pained her.” This in essence is like Soga’s (1974:113) observation of historical amaXhosa that *ofelweyo uyahlaliswa* (the bereaved are kept company and never left alone). The reason for this company is to assist and guide the steps of the bereaved, both literally and figuratively as the shock and disbelief that comes with death is one that requires special attention for the bereaved to avoid any further pain or even worse, another death because the bereaved could not come to terms with the loss of a loved one. Nwoye (2005:149) explains the reason for this support from a psychological perspective:

In this case, the community effort is to effect healing by dispelling the illusion that the bereaved person is under threat. The ‘downward arrow’ technique (Lazarus and Lazarus, 1994) that the community members apply during their therapeutic speeches is intended to convince the bereaved that he/she has not suffered more than anybody else in the world.

In the event that people are faced and overwhelmed by the frequency of death in their lives, they are bound to suffer from what Carton (2003:205-206) refers to as a “mourning fatigue.” It is through the assistance, support and sympathies displayed by family and community members that the bereaved are able to navigate their way through their loss and respond accordingly. With the assurance of the performance of mourning rituals, the bereaved appreciate that through death, their loved ones have found peace. Mehraby (2005:63) in Nwoye (2005:149) explains a similar phenomenon in the Muslim community:

A collective grief system supports the bereaved family through frequent visits, offerings of food, congregational pray[er], reciting the Qur’an and strengthening their faith by returning them to Allah.

4.5.1 *Ukubuyiswa kwezandla: ukukhapha as ritual labour*

Dlanga (2015:10) states that, “with the arrival of someone new, tea and a fresh batch of yellowy sweet scones would accompany the visitors.” With these frequent servings of food and light

refreshments such as tea and scones, various groups of women, particularly *abatshakazi* (group of newly wedded women; see Zungu and Maphini, 2020) would be delegated to prepare and serve them to any and everybody in attendance.

Abatshakazi and *abafazi* (women, both married and unmarried) from the family or clan as well as *abatshakazi* from the community would do the work known as *ukubeka iimbiza* (cooking) in the morning. Those who would not be able to make it would send money or groceries or they would come in later in the day to help with the washing of the pots or the next day to help in any way they can. Mntambo (2020:124) ascertains “that the reality of black women is that work and working is their condition, whether we are referring to formal or informal work.” This communal work during death and mourning is not limited to women alone. Men too play their role in their respective positions such as the slaughtering of the sacrificial ox, setting up the tent and the digging of the grave. These are tasks done under the supervision of senior men. This collective labour is evidence that *wonke umntu uyakhathwa ngoontanga bakhe* (every person (adult) during death is accompanied by his/her peers) whose presence and labour is their act of service to the bereaved whilst they mourn.

4.5.2 Collective expression of grief

In his recollection of the two weeks leading up to his father’s funeral, the Media and Marketing personality, Khaya Dlanga (2015:10) observed that as a five-year-old, this period was like a party instead of a mourning period. Everyone showered him with attention and affection at this funeral. He remembers that “when black people mourn in the place of my birth, the region of Mount Ayliff, the atmosphere is always a mixture of sombre and festive.” This reveals that for black people, and particularly amaXhosa, one does not experience grief in isolation. Family and community members make it their mission to ensure that the bereaved are not disturbed by daily chores during their mourning period. Dlanga (2015:10) further recalls that, “there was a constant stream of people arriving at my grandmother’s house in Danti: it was a hub of activity.” During this period, family and community members do their best to ensure that the bereaved are taken care of and that they are not lacking anything, especially food and support. From the moment death is announced, (*ukubikwa komphanga* Soga 1974:123-124, Mndende 2002:114-115), various groups of people would make their way to the home of the bereaved to pay their condolences and provide their assistance in any way they know how; be it helping with the daily domestic routines (cooking, cleaning and babysitting), prayer, sitting together with the bereaved (*ukukhunga*), especially the chief mourner who is usually the widow, on the mourning mattress or *ukhuko*.

These acts of service are an affirmation for the bereaved that they are indeed members of a larger community which supports them in their times of need in as much the same way they would celebrate with them in their joyous and jubilant moments. Dlanga (2015:10-11) attests to this as he reminisced his observation that, “each time a new group of mourners arrived, they entered the gate singing a hymn and I rushed outside to watch the walking choirs as they made their way to the house.” For a five-year old child, this would indeed be a spectacle but for the adults who understood the importance of this period, it is an opportunity to do their best to ease the burden for those who are mourning. Nwoye (2005:149) explains the healing powers of such activities by claiming that, “performative practices (like didactic and evocative speeches, music and dance) promote the healing of the bereaved person’s event memory.” These expressions performed during the mourning period and during the funeral are a reminder to the bereaved that loneliness through this difficult time will not be their portion as they have people to lean on, as their support is also a reminder that they too (family and community members) are familiar with this anguish as death visits each and every one of us.

This is different from what South African author and columnist, Sisonke Msimang experienced during the mourning period following her uncle’s death in 2021. Msimang (2021) paints a picture of how collective mourning takes place in contemporary South Africa, particularly among Black South Africans. She explains by stating that, “at home, in South Africa, death brings the neighbours and the house overflows and at dusk we sing until we cry, or we cry until we sing. We pray, even those of us who are godless, and we call out to our ancestors” (Msimang, 2021). As Msimang (2021) reveals, for South Africans (particularly Black South Africans) death is not a private affair, it is publicly shared and mourned publicly. That is done to remind the bereaved that they are a part of a community that not only celebrates with them in times of victories, but that they are part of a community that also mourns with them in times of crisis, especially the time of death. Unlike where Msimang lives, in Australia, where mourning is a private affair, in South Africa, death sets in motion many events that disrupt the binary between private and public - everything becomes a communal affair. Not to say that Black South Africans are excessively inquisitive and overbearing people who impose themselves into other people’s affairs and businesses but they are simply a community where an individual’s life is too precious to be ignored. Individual lives cannot be lived-in isolation and so is their death. Therefore, mourning automatically becomes a public affair which causes a ripple effect in the larger community. Msimang (2021) reminds us that indeed “Grief is

another word for love.” It is believed that if there is a large amount of funeral attendees in one’s funeral, it meant that the deceased was indeed loved by many people.

Conclusion

This Chapter presented the selected four key texts; Tiyo Soga’s (1974) *Intlalo kaXhosa*, *The Greater Dictionary of isiXhosa* (1989, 2003, 2006), Nokuzola Mndende’s PhD thesis *Signifying Practice: AmaXhosa ritual speech* and Khaya Dlanga’s (2015) memoir, *To Quote myself*. These distinct texts allowed this study to exhibit and explore *ukukhapha* during death in different generations of amaXhosa, thus identifying the similarities and differences this rite and practice has gone through. This was done by relying on (language) isiXhosa as a source of knowledge which conveys the world-sense of amaXhosa which resonates with the Sapir Whorf Hypothesis (SWH). The SWH submits that language shapes and influences people’s ideas and perception of the world. By examining these texts, this Chapter submitted that for amaXhosa, grief is communally shared - it is collective mourning. This is illustrated by how AmaXhosa speak about death and how they understand it. Furthermore, this is translated into the assistance that is provided to the bereaved by their community (including family members). Thus, it was revealed that *ukukhapha* during death is not only confined to the slaughtering of an ox to accompany the spirit of the deceased to the ancestral realm but it is also critical to acknowledge the labour and interactions between the living as they assist each other understand death and share this burden as a collective. Particular attention was paid to the ox that is slaughtered to accompany the deceased to the spirit realm for both its symbolic and functional purposes.

This Chapter also stated that isiXhosa as a language devoid of gender pronouns as shown in the GDX (1989:742 and 2003: 50) allows for an interpretation of the fluid rite of *ukukhapha*. This study further established that *ukukhapha* is practiced for a distinct group of women. This sharply contrasts the English translation of this rite which limits it to a rite reserved for men, particularly the head of the household and men who had livestock. Furthermore, the GDX (2006:50) entry number 8 demonstrated that there are distinct women and family members who play a significant role within the homestead, and by extension the community at large, thus showing the nexus between gender and seniority in the performance of the practice of *ukukhapha* during death. This evidence supports the thesis advanced by this study that *ukukhapha* is where and when there is an intersection between seniority and gender, instead of the separation of the two. This, has been shown in Chapter Three is an expression of the world-sense of amaXhosa which is embedded in their language and practice. Due to this intersection between gender and seniority embedded in *ukukhapha* and isiXhosa not having

gender pronouns such as 'he' or 'she' does not mean that there is equal treatment between amaXhosa women and men. This will be discussed elaborately in Chapter Five.

Chapter Five

The world-sense of *ukukhapha*; fluid language; fixed gender and seniority

Introduction

Drawing on the theoretical framework in Chapter Three, this Chapter discusses and aligns *ukukhapha* with language, gender as well as seniority to describe amaXhosa's world-sense and the Sapir Whorf Hypothesis (SWH). This study envisages a full understanding of how amaXhosa speak about death and how their women and men practice *ukukhapha* as well as how that helps in their understanding of death. Chapter Four found that according to the four key texts studied in this thesis for amaXhosa funerals are a public affair and grief is shared by the community. It is through *ukukhapha* that the sharing of this public grief reconciles amaXhosa's sense of death, the afterlife, ancestors and their relationship with their communities. This study explores how language facilitates amaXhosa's shared responsibility during death and how it shapes their world-sense regardless of the evolutions that the practice of *ukukhapha* has gone through, for different generations. The findings revealed that *ukukhapha* does not happen in isolation, it is exhibited in the daily interactions that people have with each other. This rite of passage is embedded in the language that amaXhosa speak as exemplified in their euphemisms about death and how this translates into their perception of it (death).

This Chapter first focuses on how *ukukhapha* as a rite of passage for the deceased was performed in pre-colonial life. It also focusses on the changes that it has gone through and how it is practiced by contemporary amaXhosa which shapes and influences how they speak about death. Focus will be on the beast or goat which is scarified and which is used to perform *ukukhapha* as well as what this is attributed to. *Ukukhapha* is more than slaughtering an animal, to *khapha* the deceased; it also entails the support the community gives to the bereaved. Nembahe (1998:63) states that "most of the practices that are carried out in the initial stages of bereavement constitute the *ukukhapha* practice."

People gather at the home of the deceased or the place where the funeral will occur to provide support for the bereaved, emotionally and practically (Nembahe, 1998:63). This will lead to a discussion of the practical support from the community through *ukukhapha* during mourning and its significance for the bereaved and to a successful send-off for amaXhosa.

Relying on linguistic evidence, like Maseko (2019:36) this study examines how social roles used to be organized, how they continue to be organized, along with the evolution of the organization of these roles. Furthermore, by relying on the selected texts listed above, this Chapter will specifically examine how gender and seniority are key factors in organizing amaXhosa society specifically during mourning and thus answers the question of how amaXhosa women and men practice *ukukhapha* during mourning, respectively. This Chapter submits that for *ukukhapha* during death and mourning, gender and seniority are not mutually exclusive.

5.1 *Ukukhapha* and language

Maseko (2019:41) asserts that, “language whether written or spoken, is the medium through which *abantu*- the beings with a soul/people- share their values, thoughts and opinions about their physical, social and spiritual environment.” With that being said, it is critical to note that languages are ways through which their speakers articulate themselves, where they skilfully select words with meaning to make sense of their environments, thus affirming the argument advanced in Chapter Three that each language is resourceful in its own right, not in comparison to others.

According to Cakata and Ramose (2021:02), “re-centring African epistemologies requires their languages of transmission. Language brings meaning to the expression that African spirituality embedded in the culture.” Therefore, it is not enough to describe language as a mode of communication as it is insufficient to satisfactorily express its role in society; language is also a source of knowledge, it unlocks meanings embedded in words which are a gateway to understanding the worldview and world-sense of the speakers of their languages (Maseko, 2019:41). Ntshingana (2019) notes that, “language is linked with the total set of cognitive capacities that enable human beings to understand the world with refined conceptual tools, and that are embedded in their experience of the world.” It is safe to reaffirm that by using linguistic evidence to understand *ukukhapha* in relation to death, this study is looking at it from the point of view of amaXhosa which privileges their lived experiences as demonstrated by the four key texts. Moreover, Cakata and Ramose (2021:05) explain that, “cosmologically, language is the vessel of spirit transmission. *Isibizo* (derived from *ukubiza*, which means to call) means calling the word’s spiritual essence to life.” Simply put, words carry with them spiritual significance which is effective to the physical world.

It is noteworthy to interrogate the different definitions of *ukukhapha* or as the GDX (1989) puts it *Idini lokukhapha*, between the isiXhosa definition and the English translation. The isiXhosa definition states that *ukukhapha* as a death rite of passage is performed for the head of the household (*usokhaya*) or any other person who has the head of the household's mark (GDX, 1989:742). The English translation uses the gendered pronoun 'he' to refer the head of the household but neglects the fact that the *ukukhapha* ritual may also be performed for a woman as she is also a member of the family and has the mark of the head of the household (GDX, 1989:742). The isiXhosa definition refers to *ukukhapha* as performed for a man but does not limit it to men (GDX, 1989:742). What is evident in these definitions is that the isiXhosa definition is flexible and open, it is not confined and restricted by gender pronouns which make *ukukhapha* a ritual solely for men yet it has potential to accommodate women whose deeds and seniority are deemed fit for someone who must have *Idini lokukhapha* performed for them as 'new' ancestors.

As proposed by the Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis (SWH) this study affirms and concurs with the view that language shapes and influences people's thoughts about the world and that the language and thought nexus translates into their realities and an expression of the world-senses (Tohidian, 2009:68). IsiXhosa shows that amaXhosa perceive the world differently from people who speak different languages, and thus, also understand or make sense of death differently from people from other linguistic groups but may share a number of similarities with people from the Nguni linguistic group. Diniso (2017:97) maintains that amaXhosa from the former Ciskei refer to the beast that is slaughtered for the *ukukhapha* ceremony as *eyamarhamncwa* (a beast), whereas this may not be the case for amaXhosa from the former Transkei as it is commonly known as *inkomo yezila* (a beast for the purpose of mourning).

5.1.2 Men and seniority

By confining *ukukhapha* ritual as a rite of passage solely for men, the English translation also misses the reality that *ukukhapha* is performed for a distinct group of men, particularly the head of the household, men who had cattle, men who had performed *ulwaluko* and men whose deeds and seniority deem them fit for this rite of passage. Therefore, Ntombana (2011:79) explains that, "the Xhosa initiation creates peculiarity of hierarchy in manhood; there is a clear distinction between an *inkwenkwe* (a boy), an *ikrwala* (graduate or new man), an *umfana* (young man), *indoda* (a fully-fledged man) and *utata* (father or matured man) as well as an *ixhego* (old man)." Ntombana (2011:79) affirms that certain men or biological males would not have *ukukhapha* ritual performed for them in the event that they died at the stage they are

currently in i.e., an *inkwenkwe* would be excluded from this ritual because he has not yet passed through the initiation rite of passage. Through my personal communication with the late Dr Mhlobo Jadezweni, he informed me that historically, in the event of *umkhwetha* (initiate) dying in the initiation school; his body would have been buried in the veld not far from the *ibhoma* (initiation hut) and upon the completion of the initiation period, a calabash (*ingqayi*) would be broken in the *nkundla* (the space between the houses and kraal in a Xhosa homestead) of the dead initiate's homestead, thus signalling and informing his family that the initiate did not make it out alive from the initiation school. Mndende (2002:114) corroborates this as she explains that:

in the case of *ingozi* (accident), for example, if someone is struck by a lightning, killed during war, or is drowned, it is necessary to bury the person at the site of the accident even though other rituals like 'accompanying' and 'bringing back' are performed later.

Currently, this is not the case for every contemporary amaXhosa household as some of them have adopted Christianity which allows them to bury their loved ones where they deem fit. Some amaXhosa households that still live by the principles of African Traditional Religion (ATR) which do not permit the corpse of a deceased person who died under the circumstances mentioned by Mndende (2002:114) not to enter the homestead because they believe that this will cause more of such tragic deaths. If this was not adhered to and deaths of this nature (accidents) occurred, they would be required to consult an *igqirha* (diviner) to *lungisa* (fix) or *hlamba* (cleanse) the household along with the people from it (GDX, 1989:742-743). This ritual is known as *Idini lokuhlamba okanye lokulungiswa komzi* (The sacrifice of cleansing a home). This ritual is usually done after the performance of *ukukhapha* which is meant to cleanse the home from the defilement and spoiling that came with death (for amaXhosa death is also considered a contamination or being under a dark cloud for the living), according to the GDX (1989: 742-743).

The categories of *amakrwala* (plural for *ikrwala*) and *abafana* (plural for *umfana*) would have also been disqualified from this rite of passage regardless of having graduated from *ulwaluko* (Ntombana, 2011), because they are neither heads of households nor do they own cattle. This is also currently not the case for contemporary amaXhosa as it has become the norm for every adult (including *amakrwala* and *abafana*) to have a cow *khapha* them when they die (Nembahe, 1998). The funeral costs have escalated to a point where the poor are unable to foot the ritual and burial costs (Ngubane 2004:171). Even if it means getting into debt, it has become popular among contemporary amaXhosa to slaughter a cow before the funeral of an adult to

accompany him/her into the spiritual realm regardless of the financial costs that will be incurred. This next session will show the ways in which *ukukhapha* has changed and continues to change where everyone is accommodated through the various institutions they have dedicated themselves to.

5.2 Wonke umntu ukhatshwa ngoontanga bakhe: Metamorphosis of ukukhapha

Soga (1974)'s recollection of historical burying of amaXhosa as they would be buried with their spears, axes and tobacco (among other things) – a lucid demonstration of an understanding of the continued work in the spiritual realm, even though there are different realms of the afterlife. His recollection of traditional amaXhosa burial practices resonates in various ways and the church is one of the institutions that has done so, intentionally or otherwise.

The missionary and colonial intervention led to various changes that have compelled amaXhosa as a conquered people to either assimilate or integrate into their lives which was met with both resistance and innovation by this group where remnants of their cosmology are still evident and identifiable in their language (Maseko, 2019). This institution (the church) notwithstanding its colonial mark, was utilised by a group of women known as *oomama boManyano* (Ngcobozi 2020); Ndlovu 2020). Ngcobozi (2020:10) when describing this group explains that, “in the black church, the *Manyano* is the longest standing and most prolific African matriarchal organization.” These women are famous for wearing their church regalia or uniforms which set them apart from the rest. Ngcobozi (2020:10) further locates the origins of the name *Manyano* (to join/ solidarity) as stemming and originating from isiXhosa which was first coined by amaXhosa in the Ciskei, where the first missionary influx was experienced (Ngcobozi, 2020:10). According to Ngcobozi (2020:10), this group of women hosted weekly prayer gatherings by black women of the Methodist Church. As mentioned earlier, like language, cultural rites of passage and practices are dynamic and thus are not static - they change over time to suit the needs and changes demanded by the people observing them.

This is to say that in connection with *ukukhapha*, *Manyano* Women in their respective churches visited the home of their members for frequent prayer sessions which served as their spiritual counselling since widows would not be allowed to attend church services due to the seclusion that comes with death and the mourning rituals that she must serve. *Ukuxhonywa kwebhatyi* (hanging and handing over of the church regalia coat) is one of the most important rituals that *oomama boManyano* would perform for a member of their group, where they would host a prayer service characterised by singing, prayer and speeches about the deceased. This

Ritual of Death (Ngcobozi, 2020:120) is performed differently by the *Manyano* women. One of Ngcobozi's research participants explains by stating that:

some churches in the Eastern Cape bury the *Manyano* woman in her uniform and then the other uniform is given to the oldest daughter because she now must take the role of the mother because mothers and daughters always go to church together, so the mother has taught the daughter the right thing.

The burying of the *Manyano* women in their uniform shares a similar belief of life after death. The *Manyano* women believe that by being buried in their uniform, they are prepared to meet their bridegroom Christ (Ngcobozi, 2020:126), while traditionally, the amaXhosa men would be prepared to build their kraals and prepare a place for those who will follow them in the afterlife (Soga, 1974:126). Furthermore, this group of women will use their economic resources to assist the bereaved in their preparations for the funeral through *stockvels* (Bahre 2002:19), *imigalelo* (Bahre, 2002:17), and *oomasiphekisane* (Bahre, 2002:19) which also involve providing their labour which is integral to the successful execution of any public gathering within the amaXhosa community. With these prayer sessions hosted by the *Manyano* Women, they would console the bereaved by words such as “*Ningaqumbi nide niqalekise*” (“Do not despair because of the pain death has brought you to a point that you forsake and curse all that is worth living for”). By so doing the bereaved would be reminded that there is more to live for than to be suspended in the anguish that comes with death.

Another group of people within the church who also practice this form of collective mourning are the group of men known as *Amadodana* (Madise, 2016). This group of men within the church was formed as a result of the success of *oomama boManyano* (black women) and thus, share the same practices of collective mourning where in the event that one of their members dies, they perform the service of *ukuxhonywa kwebhatyi* (hanging and handing over the church regalia coat), the daily prayer meetings which start on the day of the announcement of death till a few days after the funeral, just like what the women do.

5.3 Intersections of gender and seniority in *ukukhapha*

Drawing from the definitions from both Tiyo Soga's *Intlalo kaXhosa* (1974:122-124) and the GDX (1989:742; 2006:50)'s definition of *ukukhapha* during death which insist that this rite of passage is performed for men who are heads of households which suggests that important groups of women would be excluded and thus, would be making an ahistorical claim. This section will reveal that by excluding certain groups of women who wielded and still wield political, social, economic and spiritual power is amiss of a historic understanding and practice

of *ukukhapha*. These groups of women include senior women, *oomakhulu* (singular: *umakhulu*), royal women particularly queen mothers (Tisani, 1994:13) who at times would be regent chiefs, heroic women and women diviners. This study submits as was alluded to in Chapter Four in this study that this rite of passage is inclusive of women. This supports a claim advanced in this section that there is an intersection between gender and seniority in the practice of *ukukhapha*. To prove this, this session will rely on linguistic evidence and historic events. Equally so, this session will also show that amaXhosa have incorporated and used institutions such as the church to illustrate the practice of *ukukhapha* where certain groups of women and men *khapha* (accompany) the bereaved as they send off the deceased.

Both amaXhosa men and women understand and make sense of death as well as how this is facilitated through *ukukhapha* during death. Instead of a bifurcation of gender and seniority, *ukukhapha* shows that these binaries are not mutually exclusive, rather there is an intersection and interaction between the two. The fluidity and flexibility that isiXhosa provides due to its “gender neutrality” (Mndende, 2006) does not imply that women and men are treated equally, or that patriarchy does not exist among amaXhosa, as alluded to in Chapter Four. Rather, this is to suggest that unlike the English translation of *ukukhapha* in the GDX (1989:742) which confined this rite of passage to one that is performed solely for men, due to the use of the pronoun “he”, isiXhosa allows for a fluid understanding of *ukukhapha* in the context of death as inclusive of women, particularly senior women *oomakhulu* (plural). Equally so, what this shows is that in certain instances, heads of households are not limited to men, as the term “*umnini-mzi*” is not gender specific. An example of this is in the event that the head of the household, a man, dies, where his wife plays a significant role within the family, even if there is a son. This was the case of Suthu, who was Sandile’s mother, who in his young age, his mother was the Regent Chief who successfully ruled amaXhosa until her son was old enough to rule (Tisani, 1994:11).

For a man to be a ruler among amaXhosa, his claim to the throne is dependent on his mother’s status, if his mother comes from a royal clan. That is why amaXhosa claim that “*inkosi ngunina*” (“the status of the mother decides whether the candidate will be ruler or not”) (Tisani, 1994:13). With the mother playing such an important role in the selection of a ruler, this proves that among amaXhosa, a woman, particularly a mother, wielded power and influence which shaped the politics of the day, and thus, the status of such important people (mothers) cannot be reduced to that of a person who would be excluded from the *ukukhapha* rite of passage, in

sharp contrast to a view held by Soga (1974:122) who maintains that this is a rite of passage that is not for the wife and children.

Regardless of the power that was wielded by a queen mother, Suthu, it is critical to note that the vast majority of literature engaged in this study highlighted that *ukukhapha* was performed for men who were the heads of households. Soga (1974:122) further maintained that this excluded women and children. It is equally important to add and emphasises that Soga (1974) was a product of missionary education and this could have influenced his views. Tisani (1994:15) eloquently explains this as she noted that:

the absence of women from colonial records may be due to the fact that they did not play a major role in politics. The other reason, however, is that on occasion when they did participate, colonial officers were just not in the habit of interacting with women in the political field and therefore women were excluded from their records.

This exclusion of women in the colonial officers' records is a part of their worldview which excluded women from the public space and thus, confined them to the private space, which is the home. This binary between public and private, which locates women in the private space and men in the public space does not fit neatly in the world-sense of amaXhosa. It is important to note that this study is not a romanticisation of amaXhosa life which pits African (amaXhosa) life against Western (European) life. Rather, this study simply resonates with the Sapir-Whorf-Hypothesis which, among other things, argues that different people who speak different languages perceive the world differently as language is an expression of their world-sense(s) and worldviews. Tisani (1994:15) also shows that queen mothers were always in the presence of other women in the event that they would meet visitors and foreigners which meant these women were their *bakhaphi* or what Mntambo (2020) in the *umemulo* context refers to as *iimpelesi zabo* (these women were their entourage or council members).

Tisani (1994:15) explains that, "it is a fact that, ... queen mothers were accompanied by women attendants in their meetings with colonial officials." As was shown by Bongela (2018) *ukukhapha* as an everyday expression of amaXhosa is the bedrock of ubuntu, which is at the centre of amaXhosa life. Furthermore, *ukukhapha* which is present in virtually all seasons of amaXhosa life is evident in diplomatic affairs which is true to the ethos of amaXhosa life or *isiNtu* which informs us about *ukungahambi wedwa* (not being alone and not traveling alone). Moreover, Tisani (1994:15) maintains that, "women also featured during the times of war as ambassadors between warring sides. That the British soldiers never respected their status and instead raped them, does not reduce the important role they were playing." Furthermore,

the role of princesses was one that was reduced to simply being “used by their male relatives as to seal political alliances through marriage contracts” (Tisani, 1994:15). Ironically, as Tisani (1994:15-16) posits, it was the very same princesses who would go on to wield political power as queen mothers after marriage who determined who would be the ruler.

5.4 Collective mourning through *ukukhapha* as protection and healing

Recalling the passing of his father during his childhood, celebrated Advertising and Social Media personality, Khaya Dlanga, notes in his memoir titled *To Quote Myself* (2015) that during the mourning period prior to the funeral, family and community elders would do all they could to keep the children occupied by showering them with attention so that the children do not feel the void left by the death of a loved. Like Dlanga (2015), Hugo Canham (2021:298) also recalls his experience of growing up in Lusikisiki, Eastern Cape, during the mourning, leading up to the funeral, where there would be delegations of people coming in and out of the home of the deceased to pay their respects and comfort the living relatives of the deceased. Canham (2021:298) recalls that people would constantly be served with hot beverages such as coffee or tea and/or food. These activities would temporarily suspend the feeling of loss and despair for the relatives as it would serve as a reminder to the bereaved that in their time of mourning, they are not alone and that they can rely on their community for emotional, financial, social and practical support. Dlanga (2015) and Canham (2021) as relatively young amaXhosa men who have ties both in the rural and urban areas can reconnect with their family members through *ukukhapha* when death or any event happens in their respective lives and are able to temporarily suspend their lives in the hustle and bustle of the cities.

Communal support during mourning is not unique to amaXhosa, different ethnic groups in Africa share these similarities (such as lobola – (dowry)) in some rituals and bereavement rituals are some of those shared commonalities (Matoane, 2012:108). Collective mourning through *ukukhapha* is also practiced by other African groups living in the Limpopo Province (in South Africa) such as Basotho, baPedi, baVenda and Batswana. Mapaya and Mugovhani (2014:914) claim that, “women would fetch water to fill the tank placed at the homestead of the deceased, men would start collecting firewood, erect the tent (which has accrued some significance in relation to death), and get themselves ready to slaughter the beast on the eve of the funeral service.” Furthermore, able-bodied man (especially young men) would gather at the gravesite to dig the grave before the day of the funeral (Mapaya and Mugovhani, 2014:914). Due to the services (either emotional, financial or practical) rendered by family and community members the funeral is always a success and the bereaved are able to attend to their grief (along

with the rites and rituals they must observe during the mourning period) without the frustration of sole responsibility of arranging the funeral.

Collective mourning protects the bereaved from falling into financial debt, as they would be compelled to outsource services that are rendered by their respective communities when mourning (Canham, 2020:299). After the funeral, people in attendance would talk about “the beautiful send off and remark on the size of the crowds, the warmth of kin and the generosity of community” (Canham, 2021:299). Through *ukukhapha* as an expression of amaXhosa language and collective mourning world-sense, people can come together to mourn the dead and they are also able to come together to show support for the bereaved as members of their respective communities. Burial societies also known as *oomasingcwabane* (let us help bury each other) protect African societies from the volatile and excruciating funeral costs.

These costs range from transporting the body of the deceased from where he/she lived to their rural home, if one has ties with it and has made it clear either in a will or spoken word through *imiyolelo* (last dying wishes) (Soga, 1974:124); Mndende, 2002:119-120), transporting mourners, tents, food, the animal that will be slaughtered to accompany the deceased’s spirit to the ancestral realm to the actual burial costs. Lee (2011:226) maintains that funerals are potential gold mines for entrepreneurs as they put excessive pressure on the bereaved to deliver a ‘dignified’ farewell which family and community members will marvel. African societies are convinced that a glamorous and expensive funeral is reflective of how much the bereaved was loved by his/her family members. This notion has permeated most African societies due to Western influences as funerals as well as funeral rites have been commodified to support Western influenced mass consumerism and capitalist tendencies (Lee, 2011:226). Moreover, Lee (2011:229) argues that, “burial society membership was used to consolidate women’s position in town.” African women who moved to urban areas who were tasked with delivering decent funerals for their loved ones who died in towns to supplement their poor wages and salaries during apartheid invented creative ways to assist one another during these tough times, this is still the case in the democratic South Africa.

Conclusion

This Chapter revealed that language can be used as a source of knowledge which preserves people’s ways of knowing, meaning making and world-senses. Using linguistic evidence to recover precolonial amaXhosa practices during death which are embedded in Tiyo (TB) Soga’s (1974) *Intlalo kaXhosa*, Nokuzola Mndende’s (2002) thesis *Signifying practices: amaXhosa*

ritual speech and *The Greater Dictionary of isiXhosa* (1989 & 2003) cultural essays and definitions, this Chapter exhibited that language is indeed a reliable resource to unearth knowledge that is pivotal to people preserving and reinventing themselves along with their cultural practices. This preservation allows people to better understand seasons that are part of their life cycles. Dlanga's (2015) *To Quote Myself* helped us unpack the continuities in mourning practices that have been used by amaXhosa to understand death. These practices have illustrated that during death and mourning, the world-sense of amaXhosa reveal that communal assistance through practices such as *ukukhapha* are the heartbeat and bedrock of the amaXhosa society. What this Chapter has presented is that *ukukhapha* during death does not occur in isolation - in fact, it is plausible to argue that *ukukhapha* is a conglomeration of all the processes that are set in motion due to the occurrence of death which involves the work done by *umongi* (Solomon 1986), a person who takes care of an ailing person till his/her last moment. An *umongi* is also there to close the deceased's eyes, to *ukubika komphanga* (announcing death), *ukuhlalisa ofelweyo* (Soga 1974)(keeping the bereaved company during their mourning period by spending nights in their home), *ukuvela* (paying one's condolences) and *ukubuyisa izandla* (returning assistance that was rendered to one in their time of need). That is why this study focuses on the practice of *ukukhapha* during death which is not limited to the sacrificial beast and spilling of blood which connects the living and the ancestors but rather, to also cast a spotlight on how amaXhosa maintain their relationships with the living and how this practice is still relevant to different contemporary generations of amaXhosa.

This Chapter detailed the difference between the isiXhosa definition of *ukukhapha* and the English translation of *ukukhapha* contained in the GDX (1989). It was explained that the isiXhosa definition used language in a flexible way by not confining *ukukhapha* as a mourning ritual which is only performed for the head of the household or men. The English translation by using and relying on its gendered pronoun 'he' explicitly confined the *ukukhapha* ritual exclusively for men. Moreover, this Chapter also advanced an argument that *ukukhapha* during death does not separate the relationship between seniority and gender. In fact, in this ritual, gender and seniority are not mutually exclusive. It was further submitted that it is not all males who have this ritual performed and that women are not inherently excluded from this practice. Men had to possess certain qualities when they were alive to earn the right to have this ritual performed for them. What is amiss from Soga's *Intlalo kaXhosa* (1974) and the GDX (1989) are the details of women as ancestors and their roles in the ancestral realm. These texts have shown that men as ancestors have to continue the work of building their kraals and working on

their *indima* (agricultural land usually utilized for ploughing and grazing purposes) hence they are buried with tools and paraphernalia such as axes and spears (Soga, 1974). That is why this study submits that it is critical to study language, particularly isiXhosa in relation to how amaXhosa use it as their ‘knowledge bank’ that is preserved and used by different generations of amaXhosa, which is evident in their customs and practices. Lastly, this study revealed that *ukukhapha* during death should be investigated further as it is a practice that exhibits an interconnectedness between gender and seniority, instead of pitting them against each other. Like Cakata and Ramose (2021:11) this study seeks to, “call further excavation into the cosmological understanding of isiXhosa practices.”

Chapter Six

Conclusion

This study sought to establish how *ukukhapha* as an everyday practice of amaXhosa was utilized by amaXhosa during death which is a reflection of their world-sense. Particularly, the aim of this study was to trace how amaXhosa speak about death and how *ukukhapha* consolidated family and community affinities and relations between the living and equally so, the nexus between the living and the ancestors. *Ukukhapha* as a rite of passage is embedded in the amaXhosa world-sense which posits that life and death are not mutually exclusive. It further acknowledged in amaXhosa world-sense that death is not a termination of life, rather it is a continuation of life which transcends the physical realm (Soga, 1974; Solomon, 1986:22; Bongela, 2001:53; van Heerden, 2002; Yawa, 2010; Bogopa, 2020).

Literature that was consulted and used in this study to define *ukukhapha* advanced an argument that it is a gendered rite of passage which is performed solely for men, particularly the head of the household, *usokhaya*, who is deemed to be a man as highlighted by Soga (1974), *The Greater Dictionary of isiXhosa* (1989:742), van Heerden (2002), Diniso (2017:94), Tshoba (2014:23). However, findings from this study sharply contrasted that skewed view as it was revealed that confining *ukukhapha* to a ritual performed solely for men (male heads of households and male cattle owners) excludes important groups of women who in the annals of history have epitomized important virtues such as industriousness, heroism and divine favour which are central to amaXhosa life. This thesis maintained that the exclusion of women from this rite of passage, is contrary to historical amaXhosa practices and world-sense. This thesis also revealed that *ukukhapha* should not be only confined to the ritual practice but should also elucidate the important communal work performed by the living since in their shared public grief as a consequence of death, offer support in various ways which range from providing their labour, economic and spiritual assistance which is instrumental to the bereaved, particularly during the numerous processes set in motion by death.

By utilizing four key texts written over different times- namely Tiyo (TB) Soga's *Intlalo kaXhosa* (1974), *The Greater Dictionary of isiXhosa* (1989 and 2003), scholar and cultural activist, Nokuzola Mndende's (2002) PhD thesis- *Signifying Practices: AmaXhosa Ritual Speech* and lastly the Media and Marketing personality, Khaya Dlanga's *To Quote*

Myself (2015) - this study defined and illustrated *ukukhapha* both as a rite of passage and communal mourning through the assistance provided by family and community members. By examining ways in which *ukukhapha* in the Sociolinguistics of the discipline of African languages has been located in literature, the study maintained that this rite of passage has been documented as solely reserved for men and fixated on the slaughtering of a sacrificial beast or what Mndende (2002) refers to as *inkomo ethethayo* (a cow that speaks). This gave an impression that *ukukhapha* is a rite of passage that is the domain of men and their quest for 'being worth ancestors.' This is evident in Soga's *Intlalo kaXhosa* (1974) which is one of the valuable and popular texts in isiXhosa literary historiography. It detailed traces and remnants of historical amaXhosa life embedded in their language, practices, social organization, rituals and customs.

Equally so, the cultural essays contained in *The Greater Dictionary of isiXhosa* (GDX)(1989) have corroborated this narrative about *ukukhapha* as solely a men's rite of passage. But the second volume of the GDX (2003) has provided a more flexible and fluid understanding of this rite of passage as it did not rely on the patriarchal definition of this rite of passage. It gave a close reading of it (*ukukhapha*) as a rite of passage that is also performed for people who play a pivotal role within the household (and community). This study submits that *ukukhapha* is also performed for specific groups of women. Essentially, the GDX's (2003) display of gender neutrality (Mndende, 2002) in isiXhosa as a language that does not have gender pronouns (Maseko, 2019) illustrated that this is a rite of passage that is not performed only for men. Currently *ukukhapha* as a rite of passage and communal mourning is performed for every amaXhosa adult regardless of gender, age or social position, rather it is becoming a norm than an exception.

Even though isiXhosa may be gender neutral and not possess gender pronouns, this does not mean that amaXhosa men and women are treated equally or that patriarchy among historical amaXhosa did not exist until colonization. Rather, this study showed that gender is not the main social marker among amaXhosa, that it is a combination of gender and seniority that are pivotal in organizing society, Mndende's (2002) doctoral thesis has been pivotal in explaining these dynamics. Dlanga's (2015) memoir, thus, provided an illustration of *ukukhapha* as communal mourning through the support given to the bereaved, particularly the widow and children. This support is also extended to the practical support provided to the bereaved which among other things includes daily prayer meetings, the singing of hymns, the cleaning and cooking of meals for the hordes of mourners who visit the bereaved to pay their

last respects through the work of *ukuvela* (see Jimlongo, 2021) all the while, the bereaved are attending to their personal grief and mourning rituals etc.

It is this support that has over generations helped sustain and strengthen kinship and communal ties between the living and has sustained amaXhosa through the various tribulations and precarity that they had and continue to encounter in a post 1994 South Africa or a democratic South Africa which are exacerbated by the prevailing socio-economic challenges. It is against this backdrop that this study argued against the bifurcation of *ukukhapha* during death as a rite of passage and collective grief as these two practices occur simultaneously and in hindsight provide an informed and nuanced undertaking of how amaXhosa understand, speak and make sense of death.

As shown throughout this study, there is no bifurcation between the material and spiritual world for amaXhosa and thus spirituality is where they find their strength and resolve to pick up their lives and continue living without the deceased. This is not unique to amaXhosa as shown by Ngcobozi (2020) in her book titled: *Mothers of the Nation: Manyano Women of South Africa*. These *rituals of death* that Ngcobozi (2020) writes about in Chapter Five of her book are important to *Manyano* Women, in various churches, who also rely on prayer and group solidarity in good and bad times, particularly during death. They would make it their mission to ensure that the funeral of one of their members is carried out in a dignified manner that is befitting a member of *uManyano*. *Amadodana* like *uManyano* would do the same for their members.

Globally, through disciplines such as Anthropology, Psychology and Theology, death and amaXhosa's understanding of it has been centred on death such as the Nongqawuse cattle killings of 1856-1857, wars of land disposition (Cakata and Ramose, 2021), the Bulhoek Massacre, apartheid deaths, HIV/AIDS deaths. Little to no significant analysis is advanced to understand how amaXhosa speak and come to understand death, grief and mourning as well as how their everyday navigations are altered, ruptured and continued amidst these changes. By relying on linguistic evidence, this study exhibited the wealth of knowledge embedded in isiXhosa as a language, and how it is an expression of amaXhosa's world-sense which shapes, informs and influences their perceptions of the world. Essentially, by tracing the historical and contemporary understanding of amaXhosa's conception of death, this thesis has presented a reservoir of knowledge stored in isiXhosa, not only for its instrumental value of conveying information, but equally its intrinsic value of storing and exhibiting their world-sense, meaning

making and their perception of the world. This resonates with the Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis (SWH) which argues that language shapes, informs and influences how a people perceive the world. It is for this reason that the SWH maintains that people who speak different languages perceive the world differently. This explains why there are various worldviews and world-senses which are presented by their speakers and preserved through language (among other things).

Relying on world-sense by African scholars such as Oyěwùmí (1997), Mndende (2002, 2006), Tisani (1994; 2019) and Maseko (2019), gender and seniority, particularly the privileging of men over women was interrogated. Whereas the notion of African culture as we know it has notoriously been the preserve of men, African feminist scholarship have assisted us to understand that this hyper androgenous practice of African culture is a result of colonial domination which has been corroborated by the African men's quest to either emulate the white men or better yet, replace him. For African women, it is essential to interrogate both language and culture in a manner that transcends the masculinist nature it has come to assume as an act to recall and examine these tools (culture and language) to serve the majority instead of pitting genders against each other.

With the National Lexicography Unit (NLU) undertaking the digitizing of the GDX (1989, 2003 and 2006), this study recommends that the definition of *ukukhapha* (*Idini lokukhapha*) as a rite of passage should be revisited to include the important groups of women (who are excluded) mentioned in this study – particularly those who play a significant role in their households and communities, instead of reducing it to a rite of passage performed for men such as the head of the household and men who owned cattle.

It is through reliance on practices such as *ukukhapha* that the responsibility that is coupled with death is shared communally and is not the occupation of a single person or household. Rather, the responsibility is shared by groups of people which helps to temporarily suspend or lift the burden off the bereaved's shoulders. Essentially, the researcher's reliance on linguistic evidence that traced how amaXhosa speak about death enabled the excavation of the practice of *ukukhapha* as both a practice and rite of passage that has a prophylaxis effect on not only on the bereaved but the community as a whole.

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