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Review

# The historical background to the Takyiman disputes with Asante

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This paper examines the historical background to the Takyiman disputes with Asante. The study reveals that cordial relations originally existed between Takyiman and Asante. Asante defeat of Takyiman in 1723 notwithstanding, Takyiman dutifully served the Asantehene as a vassal state. Under British colonial rule, Takyiman asserted its autonomy but in 1949 failed to have nine of its villages Asante seized in the 19th century restored to them. Together with other Bono states, Takyiman formed the Bono Kyempim Federation (BKF) and seceded from the Asante confederacy. Since 1959, the Asantehene has continually interfered in Takyiman's chieftaincy affairs. This paper seeks to examine the background to Asante's interest in Takyiman affairs. It argues that the Asante and British governments' interference in Takyiman's chieftaincy affairs was the major contributory factor to the Takyiman-Asante disputes in the twenty-first century. This study relied on archival data than any other source. Archival research differs from the traditional method which is based on the researcher's direct observation. The archival method concerns itself with data previously collected and kept in a repository, not necessarily by the researcher. The archival research enabled me to collect data on what actually occurred during the colonial period on the subject. Secondly, data was used from published works on the subject through library research.

**Key words:** Takyiman, Asante, Asantehene, chieftaincy

## INTRODUCTION

The state of Takyiman located in modern Brong Ahafo Region of Ghana was in the closing years of the seventeenth century among the most powerful Akan states in the forest fringes of modern Ghana lying to the north-west of Asante. Takyiman gradually expanded into what became known as the Bono Manso state. Takyiman's expansion is attributable to the expansion and flourishing trade from Asante to northern Ghana until her power and influence were destroyed in their war with

Asante in 1722/1723. Available evidence suggests that tension and animosity exist between the chiefs and people of Takyiman and the Asanteman Council. The creation of the Bono Ahafo region notwithstanding, the Asantehene blatantly interferes in the affairs of the Takyiman state. For example, in 1988, Otumfuo Opoku Ware II, the late Asantehene in a letter to J. J. Rawlings, the then Head of State of Ghana stated that he (Asantehene) was constrained to bring to Rawlings'

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attention the concern which certain decisions by Government on Chieftaincy Affairs in the Ashanti and Brong Ahafo Regions was causing him and the chiefs and people of Asante. By 1996, the Otumfuo had elevated some stools (chiefs) in the Takyiman area to paramountcies. When fighting broke out between Asante and Bono the citizens at Tuobodom in 1998, many people died, others fled and properties were destroyed.

In March 2008, Oseadeeyo Akumfi Ameyaw IV, Omanhene of the Takyiman traditional area accused the Asantehene, Otumfuo Osei Tutu II of usurping the traditional powers of Takyimanhene by installing a new paramount chief at Tuobodom describing the Otumfuo's action as "unacceptable and will not be tolerated since Tuobodom is within the Takyiman traditional area". He said also that the "Takyiman traditional area is not part of Asanteman". He is believed to have asked why the Asantehene in the twenty-first century demanded that certain villages and towns in the Takyiman area with which Asante had geographical, economic as well as social interests be part of Asante. (Agyekum, 2008:482). The Takyimanhene demanded to know why the Asantehene should foment trouble in the Takyiman state; an area which he believed was enjoying relative peace. Nana Ameyaw said that the Asantehene should avoid sowing seeds of discord in areas which are not part of his kingdom because the interferences by Otumfuo was tantamount to "indulging in slavery" (Agyekum, 2008: 481). A Ghanaian Times newspaper source, (March 19, 2008) asserted that tension had been mounting in the Takyiman state since the installation of an Omanhene in Tuobodom by the Asantehene in December, 2007. Agyekum (2008: 481) says that on 3rd Nov 2008, a letter on the Ghanaweb, an internet source indicated that the Asantehene had resorted to "setting the stage for hatred between chiefs in the two regions instead of uniting them". The aforementioned cases indicate that tension and suspicion exist between the Takyiman traditional state and Asante chiefs, located in two neighbouring administrative regions of Ghana.

Despite hostile relations between Takyiman and Asante, very little documentary information is available about the history of Takyiman's relation with Asante. These include William Tordoff, Ashanti under the Prempehs 1888 to 1935, Ivor Wilks, *The Northern Factor in Ashanti History*, and Wilks, *Asante in the 19th Century* (1975). The few publications on the Takyiman state have their own shortcomings. The main objective of Meyerowitz's works; *The Sacred State of the Akan* (1949) and Meyerowitz *At the Court of an African King* (1962), was, as she stated in Meyerowitz (1962) to commemorate the heroic fight of Nana Akumfi Ameyaw III, King of the Bono Takyiman State and his people for independence from Ashanti and the restoration of the nine villages which they had lost to Ashanti for the second time in 1935 (Meyerowitz, 1962: 5). These books discuss the Takyiman state, its institutions and some social and

customary practices of the state than their relations with Asante. Brempong and Warren's works titled *The Takyiman State Histories of Stools and Deities* provide vital information but emphasize stories of deities in the Takyiman state. Effa Gyamfi has made valuable contribution to our knowledge of Takyiman in his 'Oral Tradition and Archaeology, A case study of the Bono State' (1974) but unfortunately the information is mainly archaeological evidence. Kwame Arhin's *A Profile of Brong Kyempim* (1979), a collection of essays on the *Archaeology, History, Language and Politics of the Bono people of Ghana*, provides little information about Takyiman chiefs' relations with Asante emphasizing just the origins and achievement of Takyiman as a kingdom.

Busia's *The Position of the Chief in the Modern Political System of Ashanti* (1951) and George Agyekum's *Asante and Brong Ahafo Regions' Chieftaincy Affairs* (2008) provide useful information about chieftaincy in Asante and the Bono areas. The two books however, respectively discuss effects of British rule on chieftaincy; and proceedings at the Coussey Commission of Enquiry (1972 to 1976) into Bono chiefs' dispute with Asante. These pieces of information are all useful in helping us to understand the frequent disputes between Asante and Bono chiefs in the Takyiman Traditional area. An important element of Takyiman's history, namely, the historical relations between Takyiman's chiefs and their Asante counterparts has not been given much attention by historians. The current study seeks to fill this gap with a survey of Takyiman chiefs' relations with Asante's chiefs during the long period of their subordination to Asante in 1723 to 1959. This includes the period of cordial relations, and the era of Takyiman chiefs' struggle to control these nine Takyiman villages. The study is relevant; it will provide more information to government and civil organizations who seek a lasting solution to the frequent Takyiman state's disputes with the Asante central government.

### **The period of sacrifice, co-operation and service**

Takyiman's relations with Asante can be described as a long period of sacrifice and dedicated service from the earliest times to the late 19th century interspersed by periods of mistreatment of Takyiman chiefs and their people. In order to understand this point, it is important to examine some of the major developments that occurred during this period and how these developments in one way or the other affected Takyiman's relations with Asante. Cordial relations between Takyiman and Asante existed for several reasons; first, Takyiman and Asante royal families belong to the Oyoko clan. Takyiman regards the Asantehene as his brother (Daily Graphic Tuesday May 10, 2005: 40). Secondly, Takyiman, like other ancient states felt safe, and probably proud to be counted as one of the vassal states of Asante. Thirdly, Takyiman

became the successor state to Bono Manso when Asante defeated the latter state in 1723. This also attracted Asante to the Takyiman state. Takyiman's richness in gold, and its control of the gold trade passages to Begho's trading centres were the other factors that encouraged Asante to be interested in the affairs of the Takyiman state. Reindorf asserts that King Amoyaw (Ameyaw) taught Opoku Ware how to make gold and silver weights; to claim the estate of deceased chiefs or generals, how to enact laws, and fining offenders in order to add to his power and reduce the power of his subjects. (Reindorf, 1966: 56). Whatever the accuracy of this tradition is, it is said that certain innovations were made in the Asante financial administration when Ameyaw, the Takyiman chief was captured and sent to Kumasi in 1723. One of such innovations was the introduction of *awunyadee* (death duties), a practice for which it was useful to have the advice of Takyiman experts. (Reindorf, 1966: 72).

Another area in which Takyiman contributed to Asante's development was in its effort in Asante wars. To be able to assess the state's contribution, one needs to consider the number of troops Takyiman as a vassal contributed, during Asante's wars and the casualties on Takyiman's side. This is imperative as it was the duty of every subject state of Asante to contribute troops to Asante's military campaign when called upon to do so. The first of Takyiman contributions to Asante troops was in the Boti war, sixty years after the defeat of Takyiman. Bafour Twum, an Asante royal brought Asante into that war and lost his life during the war. Takyiman is believed to have fought gallantly in the war. Immediately after the war, Wiafe, Bafour's successor rebelled against Asante's domination. Supported by Gonja and Gyaman, Takyimanhene Kofi Kyereme quickly dispatched messengers to Kumasi to inform Asantehene of Wiafe's plans. Nana Kyereme's action was perhaps to repay Nkoranza for its involvement in the Takyiman-Asante war that led to the defeat of Takyiman in 1723. This was to win Asante's favour or perhaps to assure Asante of Takyiman's allegiance to the Golden Stool. (Warren and Brempong, 1971: 21-23). The Asantehene quickly dispatched messengers to Nkoranza to verify the authenticity of the allegation. Wiafe allegedly stood by his word and even put to death one of the Asantehene's messengers. This act actually provoked the Asantehene who entreated Nana Kyereme not to put Wiafe to death when captured. Kyereme and his Takyiman force saw this as a great opportunity to avenge Nkoranza's involvement in its defeat by Asante in 1723. Over the years, Takyiman had harboured her hatred for Nkoranza to the extent that Nana Kyereme abused the power given to him and landed Takyiman in trouble. Instead of Kyereme handing Wiafe to Asantehene, he took arbitrary decision of offering the head of Wiafe to his stool. Although, this angered the Asantehene, the Takyiman chief had nonetheless helped to eliminate a rebel of the

Asante state. (Meyerowitz, 1962: 18).

Takyiman again helped Asante when in the 1790s, Osei Kwame, the then Asantehene became so inclined towards Islam and was destooled. This precipitated an uprising in the northwest intended to restore Osei Kwame to the Golden Stool. Through the instigation of the Gyaman king, rebellion broke out in Gyaman. The rebel forces threatened to take Kumasi. The chiefs of Takyiman, Banda and Nkoranza were loyal to Opoku Fofie, Osei Kwame's successor. The royal forces were allowed to penetrate deep into the grassland north of Sakyidumase where joint Kong-Gyaman force and their allies battled an Asante army near the large town of Barbanou. The forces of the Kong-Gyaman were far larger than those of Asante. The Asante king therefore called for, and received the support of the rulers of Banda, Dwaben, Takyiman and Nkoranza to repel the invaders. Thus, one can say that Takyiman as Asante province helped Asante against enemies who had vowed to carry the war to the Asante capital. (Dupuis, 1824: 245-246). It was in the struggle between chiefs in Kumasi and their counterparts in the metropolitan districts of Adanse, Bekwai, Kokofu, Dwaben and the provinces of Kwawu and Gyaman that Takyiman stayed neutral. But even Takyiman did so this on the grounds that chiefs in metropolitan Asante should be allowed to sort out their internal differences. Events in Kumasi then were viewed by Kwabena Fofie, the Takyimanhene as the collapse of the Asante central government. Therefore when war broke out between Kumasi and Dwaben in 1875, Fofie refused flatly to contribute troops to Kumasi's war effort. After the end of the Dwaben hostilities, Mensa Bonsu demanded an apology from Fofie and his renewal of allegiance to the Golden Stool both of which Nana Fofie refused to do. Fofie is said to have explained his refusal to contribute troops to his inability to understand the issues involved in the war and reasons which prevented their resolution without arm conflict. (Wilks, 1993:271-272).

The social relations between the Takyiman and Asante in pre-colonial times were friendly. Asante's traders and farmers settled on Bono land where they created permanent settlements in modern Odomase, Nkoranza and Nsoatre. These Asante traders and hunters were not disturbed while going about their hunting and trading activities. Several of the immigrants intermarried with the Bono people. Takyiman tradition asserts also that Asante citizens consulted Takyiman deities such as Guakro, Taa kora, Taa Mensa and many others. The traditions assert that the Asante were permitted to dig for gold on Takyiman land. They sent the gold they obtained to the Takyiman chief who gave them the one-sixth portion given to all Bono miners. (Arhin, 1991: 3-4). As a vassal state of Asante, Takyiman dutifully paid an annual tribute of slaves, cows, sheep, cotton cloth and some silk products and from time to time, provided large numbers of able-bodied men to join the Asante army. Takyiman



provided between 6,000 and 12,000 men placed within the Adonten division of the Asante army, a position in which they were used as shock troops. (Wilks, 1975: 243) Historical evidence suggests also that Asante benefitted significantly from the peaceful and thriving economic atmosphere that Takyiman's interest in trade, mining and other economic activities provided. Asante engaged in panning and deep pit mining of gold and trade during Nana Ameyaw Akumfi's reign in the 14th Century. Through panning, the miners collected gold dust with cane baskets from the alluvium of rivers Tano, Tain, Bisi and Awora. (Anquandah, 1982: 97). Gold particles were also picked from the ground and along the banks of rivers and streams after they had been exposed by rain. Miners obtained greater quantities of *mpokua* (nuggets) of gold by digging into the alluvium deposits along river banks. With the use of *Asoso* (adze) and *aso* (hoe) the miners sank shafts of between two and three feet in diameter, and about thirty and sixty feet deep into the alluvium. (Effa-Gyamfi, 1978: 55).

Gold became an important commodity of trade in the Bono Manso state with Asante and northern Ghana. People transported it by head-loading quantities weighing between five and a thousand tons to Bona and Kong in present-day La Cote d'Ivoire which were important markets for the Asante gold trade. Takyiman and Asante craftsmen made golden, brass and iron products for the chief's palace and for sale to traders who patronized the Bono markets (Garrard, 1986: 101). Nana Oburumankoma, chief of Takyiman is said to have introduced cowrie shells and gold dust to facilitate the exchange of goods in the barter trade between Asante and its neighbours in the 14th century. (Asihene, 1980). The *nsennea* (scale) and the *abramboo* (gold weights) became the standard system of weighing gold. It became easier to exchange products, as the *abramboo* were in different units of *kokuo*, *nsua*, *asuanu* and *asuansa* with *kokua* being the highest unit, and *asuansa* was the smallest unit. (Aboagye interview). Asante participated actively in the gold and kola trade across Takyiman and the Salaga to North Africa. Asante's trade to the north of Africa constituted an important source of revenue to Asante and helped it in its rise as a powerful kingdom and empire. In pre-colonial times, Asante's traders freely exchanged their products in the Takyiman and other Bono markets at Ahwenekoko, Bonduku and Kintampo without hindrance (Adum-Kyeremeh, 2000: 44). Another important commodity of trade besides gold was kola nuts collected mainly by women and children from Takyiman and other forest areas during May and November. It was sold to the Hausa, Mossi and Berber traders. Kola, to these traders was an indispensable stimulant and a necessity for the travelling trader. The availability and the high demand for kola sustained the Asante-Northern Ghana trade to the nineteenth century when rubber and cocoa trade replaced it in the 1890s. (Arhin, 1967: 6).

Asante and Takyiman traditions assert that Asante

obtained the first yam seeds from Nana Ameyaw Kwakye during the reign of Osei Tutu I. Takyiman traders sold their wares of pottery, cloth, kola and the *kyem* (shield of baboon skin), in the Kumasi market. From Tafo, Kaase, Ofinso and Ohwim in Asante, the Takyiman people obtained European cloths, salt and kola. Kintampo, Atebubu and Donkoro Nkwanta, which were located along the Trade Routes from Asante to the northern markets served as resting places for Asante's traders. Takyiman oral traditions assert also that the Asante were permitted to dig for gold on Bonoland. They sent the gold they obtained to the Bono chiefs who gave them the one-sixth portion given to all Bono miners. Trade and other economic activities went on smoothly between Asante, Takyiman, Hausa and Berber traders from North Africa throughout the 18th and the 19th centuries. (Arhin, 1965: 13).

### Takyiman as an Asante Vassal state

Takyiman's defeat in their war with Asante in 1723 made her a vassal state. Available historical data suggests that the chiefs and people of Takyiman suffered indignities as members of the Asante confederacy. Some of her lands were placed under Bafuor's rule and Takyiman became part of Nkoranza territory. (Rattray, 1932: 112) says that the Brongs, when conquered became vassals of the confederacy and they were called upon in times of war. Coupled with these was the patchwork of political allegiances introduced in the Takyiman state which formed part of measures to prevent Takyiman from consolidating her power in a single unifying block. Nine of Takyiman's most influential villages called Tano-Subin villages were put directly under separate Kumasi chiefs as follows: Nkyiraa/Tuobodomo-Nsumankwaahene, Ofuman I-Adumhene; Ofuman II/Branam-Dadeasoabahene; Subinso/Tanoboase-Anantahene; Tanoso-Ahenkrohene; Buoyem-Asantehemaa. (Wilks, 1975: 245). These villages became part of their respective assigned Kumasi divisions. They paid part of the head stool's debt, fought in front of the occupant of the head stool and any revenue derived from the said villages was divided between the supervisor chief and the Asantehene. Additionally, the Takyiman king, the queen mother, and other important Bono citizens were taken as prisoners.

Takyiman's state treasury was plundered and changes were made in the Asante revenue system after the Asante army defeated Bono-Manso and Takyiman in 1723. Reindorf (1932) states that the whole treasury of the Takyiman kingdom was taken by Asante whose power was greatly increased by this victory and that several improvements were made by Amoyaw's (Ameyaw) advice, on the government and social conditions of Asante (Reindorf, 1895: 87). Takyiman's strength was diminished by the Asante policy of

'containment' through which some parts of Takyiman were directly administered by Kumasi clan chiefs. This policy hampered Takyiman's ability to form a formidable force to challenge Asante or any of its satellite states. Any such attempt would have meant that Takyiman wanted to fight Nkoranza and the Asante kingdom as a whole. In Asante, it was unconstitutional of any of the Asante provinces to wage war without the consent of the Atebubuhene. (Atta, 1992: 20-21). Takyiman oral tradition asserts also that the state took part in the Asante-Gyaman war fighting on the side of Asante. After the war, the Asantehene invited the Takyimanhene and his traditional priests to a victory parade in Kumasi. After the parade, Takyimanhene was made to surrender his villages, including, Tanoso, Tanoboase, Tuobodomo, Buoyam, Nkyiraa, Ofuman and Branam to Asante. It is not known whether these villages came under Kumasi's jurisdiction at the time of Opoku Ware I in the early eighteenth century, or later. (Meyerowitz, 1965: 20) asserts that this action took place; and was actually a form of revenge for the act done by Nana Kofi Kyereme, an ex-Takyimanhene for killing Wiafe an Nkoranza royal in the 19th century (Warren and Brempong, 1971: 23).

It would be recalled that Asante developed a policy to prevent Takyiman and other Bono people in its northern territory from trading directly with the coastal towns. These states were expected to purchase their commodities from the Asante middlemen who had in most cases monopolized the interior trade and more significantly, controlled the movement of firearms to the interior. However, after the 1874 war, this monopoly was weakened by the interruption of trade between Kumasi and Salaga by the eastern Bono who had blocked the trade route and refused to allow any Asante traders to go beyond Kintampo. In 1875, Mensa Bonsu, began an intrigue to win back some of the rebellion districts and to strengthen the tottering Asante kingdom. In the same year, Wankyi provoked Takyiman by claiming part of Takyiman as its own. Asante deemed the ensuing Takyiman-Wankyi conflict as a blessing. Bonsu instructed the Gyamanhene to arbitrate over the dispute. When Takyimanhene Fofie refused to observe the truce that the Gyamanhene had called for, the Asante government ordered the forces of Wankyi and Nkoranza to assist Gyamanhene to occupy the Takyiman town. (Wilks, 1975: 271). Knowing very well that his action would infuriate Asante, Nana Fofie sent a message through Gyarko, his nephew and heir apparent, and Nsuapim, a Buoyam royal to Gyamanhene for support in case Asante forces attacked Takyiman. Fofie urged the rest of his subjects including inhabitants of the Tano-Subin villages to accompany him to Gyaman in case of attack.

With the exception of Buoyam which initially agreed to, the rest of the Tano-Subin villages influenced by Asante, declined Fofie's request. At Buoyam, the people rebelled against their chief and threatened him with destoolment if he attempted to support Takyiman in any war. Takyiman

was swiftly attacked compelling Ohene Kwabena Fofie and his supporters to flee to Gyaman. At Buoyam and Ofuman, Takyiman forces encountered serious exchanges with the Asante soldiers. It is said that about one third of the Takyiman people who fled lost their lives. Takyimanhene tried in vain to regain his state. Takyiman was described as the 'province' of Abora a coastal state, far away from Takyiman in 1883. (Goody, 1968: 1). Takyiman was disenchanting with Asante's rule following the prolonged indiscriminate attacks, exaction of heavy tributes and killing of Takyiman citizens. The people always wanted the fall of Asante and used the opportunity offered them by the *Apuo* festival to point out Asante's ungratefulness, and to express their delight at Asante's troubles. In an apparent claim that it was the Bono who introduced the *nsennee* (gold weights) to Asante, Takyiman *apuo* songs for example taunted; "we made scales for the Asante porcupines, they only used them to cheat us. The Asante chiefs may have bought them but he did not buy us." (Rattray, 1932:104). When the British captured Nana Prempeh I in 1896, Takyiman *apuo* songs taunted Asante by saying; "They know nothing about guns, had they known about guns, would they have let the Whiteman to seize their king Prempeh and Yaa Akyaa without firing a gun?" (Rattray, 1932:153-156). It is said that the people of northern Asante including the Takyiman and Atebubu peoples who had been paying tribute and supplying men to fight in Asante wars seceded after 1874 and would have offered their allegiance to the British if the British had shown any sign of willingness to accept it. (Takyimanhene's petition, 1949). The impetus for autonomy was provided by the British government's land and administrative policies on Asante in the 20th century.

### British colonialism and the Takyiman State

Following the British government's annexation of Asante in 1901, the Asante Native Administrative Ordinance (NAO) (1902) was passed to enforce the annexation order. Under this, Asante was divided into four provinces. These included the Western Province that comprised some Bono states including Berekum, Wam (Dormaa), Takyiman, Ahafo, Gyaman and Wankyi. Nkoranza, Atebubu, Krakye and later, Banda and Mo constituted the Eastern Province. Kumasi chiefs were forbidden from their involvement in matters in these territories and other territories that did not concern their own territories. Each division was thus, made to regulate its own internal affairs under the direct supervision of District Commissioners (DCs). Commissioners served as points where chiefs could enquire about their status viz-a-viz that of the Asantehene and his sub-chiefs. For example in 1924, Geoffrey Parker, the District Commissioner of Wankyi/Takyiman reported to the Chief Commissioner that the chiefs of the Wankyi district had ever since

Prempeh's return been anxious and nervous as to their exact status. Asante interfered in Takyiman and other Bono states' affairs. In 1927, Mr. Ballentine, the Provincial Commissioner of Sunyani informed the Akwamuhene of Kumasi that he had no business interfering in the Bono division's chieftaincy affairs. (PRAAD, BRG 2/1/8).

With respect to land policy issues, the Kumasi division was the most affected. Prempeh's deportation led to widespread changes in Asante's political affairs by the British government. One such change was the British government's policy of land alienation and ownership. In implementing this land policy, the British employed practical considerations. Administratively, it was found both convenient and efficient to place the more distant Kumasi subjects under the immediate control of the Asante Amanhene living nearest to them. When two Amanhene contested for Kumasi villages, the British chose those ones who had not sided openly against the British. It could also give to the chief, who, using tradition, put forward a strong claim to the village or villages in question. It was through this last policy that the government placed the villages in the Tano-Subin valley which had served various Kumasi chiefs since the time of Opoku Ware under Takyiman. (Tordoff, 1965: 141). Direct British interference in Asante affairs persisted from the early 20th century until 1935 when Sir Shanton Thomas, deemed it necessary for Asante's old system of administration to be restored. In his letter to Sir Philip Cumliffe-Lister on 1st March 1934, Sir Shanton explained the reasons why there should be the restoration of the Asante confederacy. He believed that the restoration of the Asante Confederacy had always appeared inevitable after the release of Prempeh I from exile in the Seychelles. Although, in the eyes of the government, he returned as a private citizen, Asantes always believed that their king had returned. (Metcalf, 1964: 636-637).

Shanton wondered whether the return of Prempeh had greater significance than would the restoration of the Asante Confederacy with official recognition of Prempeh as Asantehene. On the part of other Asante chiefs, he asserted, although, the decision to repatriate Prempeh I was a great thing, it still left Asante incomplete. These chiefs supported the proposal to re-instate Prempeh as Asantehene stating that without an Asantehene, there could be no confederacy. (PRAAD, BRG 2/1/8). For Shanton Thomas, Asante did not delight in merely giving official recognition to an office which Asante, in spite of all past vicissitudes had not ceased to recognize but rather one of restoring nationhood to the people and making them more complete. On the question of why there needed to be restoration, Shanton commented that the great masses of the people earnestly desired it and it was the principle of the then colonial government that people should be governed in accordance with their wishes. Concerning the significance of the inclusion in the Confederacy of Takyiman and other Bono divisions of

Wam Pamu (Dormaa), Nkoranza, Atebubu, Gyaman, Abease and Berekum, Shanton asserted that these were of the same stock with Asante and that the political amalgamation of the Asante and the Brong would make for a stronger state and make administration easier. (Metcalf, 1964). On the other hand, the Takyimanhene and his elders proposed for a comprehensive review of all customs and institutions to fulfil the agenda for total restoration of the Asante confederacy. He categorically rejected any suggestion for Takyiman to join the confederacy. The chief wanted to maintain the status his state has had since 1900. He objected to the return to pre-colonial status. The chief argued "if the government proposes to patch all broken traditions to conform to the order of native customs in a peaceful restoration, then Nkoranza lands must be restored to Takyiman to whom the lands formerly belonged".

The British colonial administration was bent on implementing Indirect Rule and ignored all protests. At the durbar held in Kumasi on 31 January 1935 to restore the confederacy, the Governor of the Gold Coast, Sir Arnold Hudson, declared Prempeh II formally as the first Asantehene under the British government. In his speech Sir Arnold stated that the ancient royalties of Asante divisions are henceforth, officially to be recognized and sanctioned and that... the domestic affairs and the property rights of properly constituted divisions will not be interfered with unless the native authority concerned invites assistance. Takyiman interpreted these pronouncements to mean that there would be no changes in institutions and internal relationships unless a particular part of the confederated states invited outside involvement. In fact, Sir Shanton proposed that the Bono divisions should be allowed, if they wished to join the confederacy. (Tordoff, 1965: 339). While the colonial government's principle of non-interference was reflected in the speech to restore the confederate states, Asante's standpoint of the restoration was different. The restoration was deemed incomplete until the Asantehene's rights and privileges were restored to its fullness and Asantehene was allowed to return to his pristine status. It is therefore, not surprising that at their first sitting of the Confederacy, the Kokofuhene tabled a motion calling the Councilors to implore the government to "clothe" the Asantehene with the constitutional right to interfere in the councilors' internal affairs and the restoration of Kumasi lands. This call was reflected in the closing speech of the Asantehene during the second session of the council when he informed the council about the appeal to the Government to restore his lands to him because other towns laughed at him when they hear that Kumasi lands had been taken away. (Confederacy Minutes, 1942: 7).

In the series of editorials entitled "the spiritual significance of land in Asante", the Pioneer added its voice to the call. It wrote that the restoration of the confederacy without her lands seems a hollow act. In another editorial

comment, the paper argued that when its own lands have been taken away from it, the Golden Stool could not properly adjudicate upon land cases. (The Pioneer March, 1940: 7-9). In 1936, Takyiman, which had previously objected to joining the confederacy changed her position and joined the Asante Confederacy. The ex-Nifahene of Takyiman explained that Takyiman joined the confederacy to avoid the disintegration of the Takyiman state. Asantehene had assured the Tano-Subin villages of his support and that of government to grant them official recognition as a separate Native Authority if they abandoned Takyiman and joined the confederacy. Additionally, Asante migrant settlers in some of the villages intermarried with Bono citizens and so marriage relations increased pro-Asante sentiments in the Takyiman paramountcy. Takyiman decided to join the confederacy to stop the disintegration of Takyiman through the disaffection of its villages comprising Nkyeraa, Ofuman No. 1, Branam, Subinso, Tanobuase, Tuobodom, Ofuman II, Buoyam and Tanoso (Atta 1993: 36). Despite joining the Confederacy, Takyiman lost the Tano-Subin villages again to Kumasi. Takyiman protested vehemently against the decision that the Tano-Subin villages should be made to serve their Kumasi overlords. The Takyiman chief asserted that whilst in exile at Gyaman, Prempeh I agreed to return the villages to them if they reciprocated that gesture and returned to Takyiman. They indeed acted upon that promise but for the unfortunate deportation of Prempeh I, no formalization of that negotiation was made. Takyiman also made reference to the so-called treaty with the British in 1897. These stories were in doubt because Takyiman did not produce any real evidence to back these assertions. (Petition, 1949).

The restoration of the Asante Confederacy also brought in its wake the legitimacy of positions of certain chiefs and their lands. The Committee of Privileges was established to look into the legal and constitutional status of any matter that might arise as a result of the restoration. At the proceedings held by this committee (Committee of Privileges), all the disputed villages were called to testify and give any information which would help ensure the peaceful settlement of the dispute. The testimonies indicated that the villages were divided in their allegiance to Takyiman. For example, the Nkyiraahene emphasized that his ancestors served Asante when Opoku Ware I was king till government placed them under Takyiman in 1900. During the Takyiman-Asante war of 1722/23, the people of Nkyeraa helped Takyiman against Asante. After the war, Nkyeraa was made to serve Asante through the Nsumankwaahene of Kumasi. Though the then Nkyiraahene was the son of Takyimanhene, they are independent of Takyiman. (Proceedings in Agyekum, 2008: 314-315). The Ofuman No-1 chief briefed the committee by first tracing origins of the state. The chief mentioned the earliest encounter between the founder and the queen mother of Takyiman

but rejected the fact that they served Takyiman. According to him, when the war broke out in 1723, they refused to help Takyiman. It was Dadiesoabahene who placed the state under the Asantehene. As the Takyiman people fled to Gyaman, he continued, Ofuman I pursued them. There was no communication between Prempeh and the exiled Takyiman people. Although, the founder was not a Takyiman royal by birth, by accepting to hunt for the Takyiman queen mother, he automatically became connected with the Takyiman paramountcy. The Branamhene stated that after the 1723 war, his ancestors allied with Ofuman No. 1 and were serving Dadiesoabahene. Branam sought protection from Takyiman as a bond existed between Branam and Takyiman before the war.

Apart from the afore-mentioned Tano-Subin villages, the rest acknowledged their previous relations with Takyiman before the 1723 war and the subsequent attachment with their various Kumasi clan chiefs. Though these villages had blood affinity with Takyiman, yet most of them, including Buoyam, Tuobodom and Tanobuase were resolved to serve their former overlords since the same authority that placed them back to Takyiman rule was again demanding that they should go back and serve their former Kumasi clan chiefs. (Agyekum, 2008: 314-323). On account of these revelations, the Report of the Committee of Privileges suggested that Takyiman had no case since she could not substantiate her claims; especially the alleged promise by Prempeh to restore to them the Tano/Subin villages. More importantly, the readiness of some of these villages to serve their Asante overlords did not favour Takyiman. When the Takyimanhene threatened to report to higher authority about the decision of the Committee of Privileges, the commissioner's response was that any individual who desired to do so was of course, perfectly at liberty to petition His excellency, the Governor on the point at issue and if such a person desired to do so, he (commissioner) would forward the petition for His Excellency's consideration. (Petition, 1949). Takyiman considered the loss of the villages very seriously because of the importance of the villages to the state. The Omanhene laid out strategies to reclaim the lost villages including taking legal action against the Asantehene. To this, the confederacy council responded by informing the Chief Commissioner that it was unconstitutional for any Asante person be he a chief or otherwise to institute an action against the occupant of the Golden Stool. The rule was that anyone who did so was deemed rather to have taken action against Asanteman; not the Asantehene as an individual. (Petition, 1949).

With the support of the British authorities, the Tano-Subin Native Authority was created with its headquarters at Tuobodom by order No. 26. Takyimanhene saw this as the fulfillment of a secret agenda designed by Asante and the British to break and dis-member her. Accordingly, when the Tano-Subin Native Authority was established,

the Takyimanhene was convinced that the Confederacy Council and the Government had conspired to destroy her and the only alternative was to secede from the confederacy. Takyiman left the confederacy under the pretext that the inclusion of the Asantehene as a panel member in the case in which he was equally interested was in itself a case of bias judgment. It lacked fairness as this gave Asante undue advantage. (PRAAD RAO, 2/104). The British, who were bent on ensuring success of the indirect rule policy in a united Asante, however, ignored Takyimanhene's petitions to secede. Instead, the British sought to compel Takyiman to remain in the Asante confederacy. For example, in 1947, Major C.O. Butler, the Chief Commissioner of Asante visited Takyiman to confer privately with the Takyimanhene and assured the Omanhene that he would be given a reasonable compensation and a six months tour of the United Kingdom (U.K.) if he reconsidered his decision to secede but Ameyaw rejected the offer. The chief is said to have been enraged by what he described as "an annoying letter" he received from the Chief Commissioner (C.C.) of Asante reminding him that by trying to disturb the Asante nation, he was kicking his head against a stone. (PRAAD BRG, 2/2/33).

By early July 1948, all attempts to persuade Ameyaw not to remain in the Asante Confederacy had failed. The British Colonial authorities planned to exile him. This forced Ameyaw to seek asylum in La Cote d'Ivoire. In late July 1948, the District Commissioner of Wankyi was asked to close down the Takyiman Native Authority. All appeals by Takyiman to the British to restore its authority failed. The plight of the people of Takyiman worsened when the British withheld all grants to the schools in the Takyiman district. It became the responsibility of the Takyiman people to administer the schools. Men and women voluntarily donated towards the well-being of teachers in the Takyiman schools. By August 1948 it had become evident that the British would not relinquish their support for Asante. Consequently, on 28 August, 1948 Nana Ameyaw wrote to the Asanteman and the Chief Commissioner, Asante, informing him about Takyiman's withdrawal from the confederacy. By December 1948, the Takyimanhene had secured the assurance of the three Tano-Subin villages of Tuobodom, Tanoso and Offuman II to support him if he withdrew from the confederacy. (Arthur, 1965: 50). In January 1949, the DC of Sunyani suggested to the British government not to issue gunpowder to the Bono chiefs and to withdraw education and food grants to members of the Bono Kyempim Federation (B. K. F.) formed by the Takyimanhene to pursue its agenda but Ameyaw was unyielding. (PRAAD BRG, 2/2/33). In the same year, Asanteman dispatched the Asante palace police to harass and attack the Takyiman Omanhene and his people. In a cablegram message of 22nd June, 1950, the Takyimanhene reported to the Chief Commissioner attributing the attacks to Takyiman's interest in the nine villages. The telegram

message emphasized "the whole people and chiefs of Takyiman, seriously protest against the molestation of Takyimanhene's supporters by the Asantehene's police due to political claims by Takyiman for the nine villages. (PRAAD ADM, 54/1/13).

### **The Takyimanhene's petition and government's reaction**

In the meantime, Dr. J. B. Danquah, a popular Ghanaian lawyer in the 1940s and 1950s served as Takyimanhene's counsel. He supported the Takyiman chief to submit for transmission to the British Crown three copies of a sixty-five page Petition with supporting documents. The chief "prayed" to the British crown for the re-consideration of its decision to return the Tano-Subin villages. References were made to Oral Tradition and to Ward, Reindorf, Claridge and other secondary material on Takyiman tradition and history. Other references were to the letters and correspondences between Takyimanhene and British Colonial officials. (Petition, 1949). The Omanhene appealed and prayed that the decision of the 1935 Committee of Privileges by reason of which Takyiman villages were severed from their native allegiances to the Takyiman Stool and made part of the Kumasi Division be set aside as ultra vires and unjust. It mentioned the treaty of 5th June, 1897, in which Queen Victoria pledged to "befriend and to protect the Takyimanhene and his entire country." It argued; the policy of the government or of the administration of Asante in accepting that decision and acting upon it be reversed on the grounds that the said policy was pursued from a mistaken view of the facts and from ignorance of the Treaty obligations of His Majesty (Petition). The petition described as highly provoking and unjust assaults and detention of the Takyimanhene's supporters who had been detained and seriously beaten at the hands of Asantehene's police.

In view of these alleged and real periods of Asante's mistreatment of the Takyiman chiefs and other Bono chiefs, the Bono Kyempim Movement appealed to the British government for recognition of their Federation. They appealed to government to accede to their petition to withdraw from the Asante confederacy. The British authorities were still against dividing up Asanteman, on the grounds that administration of the confederacy would be rendered more difficult in a divided Asante. Hence, they refused to recognize the Bono Federation (PRAAD ADM, 54/1/13, Accra, DC Wankyi's Report 1952). In Ofuman and Branam, the Asantehene's police arrested loyalists of the Takyimanhene including Kwasi Ankamah, Kwabena Asuman and Kofi Krah on charges of swearing an oath to sever relations with the Asantehene. These charges, the Senior District Commissioner's Office refuted. He informed the Chief Commissioner that the Asantehene had already given instructions that no Takyiman subject should be arrested on a charge of

refusing to serve him (PRAAD ADM, 54/1/3). In Ofuman I, an Asante Chief, Kwasi Dua collected £500 from inhabitants as cocoa, cocoyam, corn, cassava, yams and groundnut tributes; an action the Takyimanhene described as a recipe for turmoil and trouble. Although, the chief reported this to Goldie-Scot, no action was taken paving the way for the said chief to swear the Great Oath on Ofuman II people. The DC only threatened to send Dua to Kumasi to be beaten and molested but the case at court was left pending. (PRAAD ADM, 54/1/13).

Whilst awaiting the submission of the main Petition, the Takyimanhene sent a Supplementary Petition with information believed to have been given by Mr. Bryden, described as an authority in Asante history. With respect to this petition, the Chief Commissioner of Asante described it as a partisan document. The Chief Commissioner doubted that the British government will feel disposed to discuss the decision of the Committee of Privileges on the matter of the Takyiman villages. Before the Petitions were dispatched from the DC of Sunyani's office, the Commissioner's assessment of the two Petitions was that there was nothing new in the arguments put forward by the Takyiman chief and his counsel. The Chief Commissioner's concern was rather to request J. B. Danquah, the Takyimanhene's counsel to confirm in writing to the effect that the Takyimanhene and his elders had no intention of leaving the Ashanti Confederacy Council. (PRAAD ADM, 54/1/13). In October, 1949, W. N. L. Goldie-Scot, Asst. District Commissioner Wankyi/Sunyani wrote to Mrs. Meyerowitz, an anthropologist in Takyiman, refuting several claims by Takyimanhene Ameyaw that his contribution to the increase in revenue collection was very insignificant. He emphasized, "it was not through Ameyaw's instructions that the Tano/Subin villages contributed so much revenue in the 1948 Financial Year...the chief may only have told his supporters in these villages to pay what was agreed to at the Estimates Meeting, to help develop the nine villages in case they were eventually returned to him". The Commissioner stressed that the Area Chiefs and their supporters controlled the Tano/Subin Estimates Meetings. In his opinion, these, by far outnumbered those who supported Nana Akumfi Ameyaw, the Takyimanhene.

The Tano/Subin villages Area Treasury, the Commissioner observed, had the wholehearted support of the great majority of the people. He believed that this caused the increase in revenue from individual villages and from voluntary contributions unparalleled in the entire Wankyi sub-district in 1949. To him, this would be impossible in the case of a Treasury which did not command the support of the people. At the same time, the DC accused the Takyimanhene of allowing two lorry loads of his supporters to go to Tanoso during a riot. The Commissioner condemned this continued interventions of Takyiman in Native Affairs of other states including Tanoso stating that the chief had no jurisdiction whatever, outside the Takyiman division. In the DC's view, the

presence of the Takyimanhene's supporters and native Constables in Tanoso, and the arrest of the Tanosohene were precipitated by the Takyimanhene's interference and were done with deliberate intentions (PRAAD ADM, 54/1/13). Goldie-Scot used other occasions to caution the Takyiman Native Authority for continuous interferences in Tanoso and in the affairs of other villages. For instance, following repeated complaints from the Tanoso village that the Takyiman Native Police personnel were being sent round the villages with instructions and threats from the Takyiman chief, the DC reminded the Takyimanhene that he or his police had no jurisdiction whatever, outside the Takyiman Division whether in uniform or not. He declared also that he would fully support charges in a native court against the chief if he, the chief, tried to exercise police powers within the jurisdiction of that court. He warned that the Takyiman Native Authority Police had never been legally constituted as a Police Force and therefore had no powers whatsoever, even inside the Takyiman Division to arrest or detain people. He emphasized; owing to the suspension of your native authority, you do not possess such powers, and your police force is therefore vested with no powers whatever within or without the Takyiman division (PRAAD ADM, 54/1/13).

The British Colonial Authority signed an order suspending the Takyiman Native Authority for a further six months from mid-July 1950, and as expected, an approval given for further suspension of the Takyiman Native Courts for seven months. The Takyimanhene's Petition to the British Crown also remained on the Gold Coast, five months after it had been submitted to Goldie-Scot, the DC of Wankyi/Sunyani. The Chief Commissioner assigned three unconvincing reasons for this delay. First the great length of the Petition necessitated prolonged study. Secondly, there were other works that put pressure on the Chief Commissioner and thirdly, it was the Chief Commissioner's wish that the Petition should be read before it left his office (PRAAD ADM, 54/1/13). Regarding the supplementary petition to the British crown, the Commissioner's response was that to him the version of the martial history given by the petitioners was not correct, and that, the history that had been accepted by the Takyiman administration was incorrect. For him, the history in the Second Petition would not significantly affect the recommendations in the Report of the Committee of Privileges. He described as "generally unsound" the large conclusions based on the 1897 Treaty and the Hull report, both in the memorandum and in the supplementary petition. He described the memorandum in particular as a document that tended to obscure certain fundamental facts.

In response to the Takyimanhene's calls for the nine villages to be returned to Takyiman, the Commissioner reiterated that the issues about property rights could be determined in the courts and that it was not within the power of the executive to determine claims to the

ownership of land. The Commissioner emphasized, "by the Takyimanhene asking for the "villages" to be restored to him, he meant that the decision on the land owned by the village stools could not be taken by an executive ruling. He reminded the chief that "a decision in any particular case must be arrived at judicially, if there should be a dispute, and not by an executive decision". (PRAAD ADM, 54/1/13). Amidst this misunderstanding, the Privy Council decided that Takyiman had a stake in Ofuman I, one of the nine Takyiman villages. It decided that the issue of over lordship of subjects, which formed the second element of the Takyiman claim could be looked into by a committee of enquiry, or on reference, by the Confederacy Council. In 1950, the British government reminded the Takyimanhene that the state joined the Confederacy when the then Takyimanhene took an oath to the Asantehene. This did not differ from the manner in which an oath is taken by sub-chiefs to their Divisional Chiefs. They considered the allegiance owed by the Takyimanhene to be "in full force" which the mere inclusion of the Asantehene in the Committee of Privileges would not invalidate. The Takyimanhene's appeal was in this way "extinguished entirely." The Commissioner argued; "the fact that Ashanti is a Confederacy did not support the (Takyimanhene's) contention." The Takyimanhene was accused of breaking his oath and committing a criminal offence by refusing to attend Council meetings; and for refusing to rescind that decision until his state's petition had been granted and the villages returned. (PRAAD ADM, 54/1/13).

With reference to Takyiman as a Native Authority, the Commissioner stressed emphatically that it was inadvisable to use the term 'Native Authority' to refer to the chief and elders of Takyiman. He argued that chiefs were persons who acted for the stool in dealing with, or litigating about land; they were people who by custom exercised administrative functions and that as a matter of policy, they were generally but not invariably also the persons who constituted the statutory local government body. For the Commissioner, the three sets of functions were however legally distinct. This situation becomes apparent if a Native Authority is suspended (as the Takyiman Native Authority) and that the chief and his elders could still fulfil the other two functions in either case (PRAAD ADM, 54/1/13).

The Takyimanhene deemed it unjust that the British government's interferences in its state's affairs, an illegal aggression and an effort at the dismemberment of his state. He saw the Committee of Privileges Report in particular as direct undermining tactics of Major F.W.F. Jackson's, prejudging of the Governor's decision by his principal adviser in Asante affairs, and a conspiracy by government and Asante to destroy her. (PRAAD ADM 54/1/3, Petition, 1949). The chief looked for an opportunity to fulfill his objective spelt out in the aims of the Bono Kyempim (chiefs') movement. The formation of the National Liberation Movement (NLM), a political movement

formed in Kumasi in 1954 appears to have provided the opportunity for that. The NLM sought to achieve a federal independent Ghana with a liberal-democratic constitution.

It declared that Asante was a nation and should remain so. (Austin, 1970). The NLM's objective appealed to Asante's ethnic nationalist sensibilities but ran counter to the BKF's position and objectives. It provided an avenue for the Takyiman-led Bono movement to speed up its call for secession. After 1959, the CPP assured Takyiman and the other Bono chiefs that their wishes would be provided. By 1959, every indication was that the Bono Ahafo Region would be created. Despite the rigorous contests between Asante and Takyiman for ownership of the nine villages, the issue of traditional allegiances in the new region was totally ignored by the CPP government. The Parliamentary Act that set up the Region merely stated that the creation of the Bono Ahafo Region was done for administrative purposes. This blatant disregard of Takyiman's sovereignty by Asante and the British government sowed seeds for the frequent inter-state disputes in Takyiman paramountcy. Takyiman-Asante disputes surfaced few years after the creation of the Bono Ahafo region. Disputes and have persisted into the 21st century. All efforts by individuals and government have been unsuccessful in finding a lasting resolution to Takyiman-Asante chieftaincy and land disputes.

## CONCLUSION

It has been pointed out that the Takyiman state at the beginning of the eighteenth century was showing signs of disunity as a result of internal problems. Unfortunately for the state, their king brought trouble upon himself and the whole state. The resultant trouble was the defeat of Takyiman by the Asante army in 1723. Takyiman came out from the war as a vassal state of Asante and until the 1890s, there was a somewhat peaceful accommodation of Takyiman's new status in the Asante Central Administration as mutual and friendly relations persisted. Takyiman chiefs and their elders suffered cases of indignities as vassals of Asante despite rendering sacrifice and service to Asante and also co-operating with its rulers in the post-1723 period. Takyiman provided more men to fight in Asante wars, and because they were placed in the vanguard position, suffered heavy casualties. Besides, the Takyiman people paid heavy tributes in products and money.

In 1895, a punitive expedition from Asante attacked Kwabena Fofie, Takyimanhene compelling a section of the Takyiman chiefs and their families to migrate to Gyaman for twenty years. The British defeat of Asante and the exile of Prempeh enabled Takyiman to reassert its independence which lasted from 1900 to 1935. Takyiman lost the Tano-Subin villages again to Asante after a few years of autonomy from Asante. Towards ensuring success of the Indirect Rule policy, the British

government ignored Takyiman's petitions and all appeals for the return of its villages. The chiefs in most of these villages related closely with Asante central, paid homage and owed traditional allegiance to the Asantehene and other Asante chiefs. Takyiman chiefs supported the Convention Peoples Party (CPP) in its struggle with the Asante-based National Liberation Movement (NLM). The failure of the CPP to address the issue of traditional allegiance before the Brong-Ahafo region was created threatened peace and stability in Takyiman chieftaincy after 1959.

### Conflict of interests

The author has not declared any conflict of interest.

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Full Length Research Paper

# Ubuntu: A phantasmagoria in rural Kwazulu-Natal?

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Ubuntu is a value system that is known to be found in African communities. Like other values within African communities, it is perceived to have transcended the colonialist rule which changed the landscape of Africa including its socio-cultural makeup. Although KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) is credited for the initiation of Ubuntu, the erosion of certain cultural values has been found to be more acute in KwaZulu-Natal. That being the case, an empirical study into the existence of Ubuntu in rural KZN, Umgungundlovu District, was conducted and the results revealed that Ubuntu is an important cultural value in the community which is however perceived to be losing its importance in the younger generation.

**Key words:** Ubuntu, African value system, patriarchy, African worldview, African epistemology.

## INTRODUCTION

*Ubuntu....speaks of the very essence of being human. ...."Hey, so-and-so has Ubuntu." Then you are generous, you are hospitable, you are friendly and caring and compassionate. You share what you have. It is to say, "My humanity is caught up, is inextricably bound up, in your..... A person with Ubuntu is open and available to others, affirming of others, does not feel threatened that others are able and good, for he or she has a proper self-assurance that comes from knowing that he or she belongs in a greater whole and is diminished when others are humiliated or diminished, when others are tortured or oppressed, or treated as if they were less than who they are." Desmond Tutu, No future without forgiveness*

A study on the existence of Ubuntu was conducted in the rural areas of KwaZulu-Natal (KZN). KZN is the third

smallest province out of the 9 South African provinces, and occupies only 7.7% of the country. Despite its size, it however has a population of 10.3 million which is the second largest amongst the provinces. The capital city of KZN is Pietermaritzburg and is located in the midlands, in the apartheid era it used to be Ulundi which is situated in the Northern part of the province.

During the apartheid era, KZN used to be separated into Natal and KwaZulu which had been named so in 1497 by Vasco da Gama. Natal was regarded as a province and KwaZulu which had been named so when amaZulu 'the people of Heaven' inhabited it, was regarded as a homeland. KwaZulu means the place of the Zulus and the offer of a 'fully independent homeland' was refused by Chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi who was the leader of the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) ([sahistory.org.za](http://sahistory.org.za)). Buthelezi however received all

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privileges of chief minister of KwaZulu and led its government. With KZN having gone through a colonial history, and various authors including Igboin (2012) condemning the attrition of moral values as a result of colonialism and the intrusion of other religions which are foreign, it therefore remains that there has been infiltration and possible transformation of values, including Ubuntu, in the communities of KZN.

According to Molefe (2014) 'these are rich times for scholarship on Ubuntu, the Zulu, Xhosa and Ndebele word for humanness....' hence this article seeks to investigate the existence of Ubuntu in the area of amaZulu, where it is perceived to have emanated. This article therefore provides the views of the participants in KZN on Ubuntu, and analyses the term as a philosophical imperative amidst the changing indigenous societies which have been affected by colonialism and modernity.

### What is Ubuntu?

Societies are living organisms and are what they are because of the values that are found and utilised by their people. These values continue to define the communities throughout their existence, either in their indigenous locations or in other areas where they interact with others, their values either separate them from others or facilitate a communal spirit of co-existence with other communities. These values can however be influenced by external and at times internal factors that emanate within the different communities. The African communities and in particular South African communities in KZN are not immune to such influences.

Despite Africans being a collection of a multitude of communities, there is however an interconnectedness which is determined by their worldview. The conceptualisation of the African worldview by Lyons et al. (2011) is distinguished across the following elements:

1. Epistemology which for African people is affective and perceptive.
2. Ontology which recognises spirituality, existence and the universe.
3. Cosmology which has its roots on African values like communality, interdependence and harmony with nature; and
4. Axiology which highlights collaboration between humans.

Kanu (2010) states that colonialism and Western domination almost cost Africans their cultural trail. According to the author, in order for Africans to ascend and obtain some form of status they had to isolate themselves ideologically and physically from their culture. It could then be expected that Ubuntu would also suffer the same isolation.

Ubuntu as an African philosophy emanates from IsiZulu

'umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu' which English equivalent is 'a person through other people' which puts value on human life as a philosophy (Oyeleye, 2011). In defining Ubuntu, McDonald (2010) articulates that *Ubuntu* places the interest of the community above that of individuals and has been used by the South African state, academics, private sector and non-governmental organisations post-apartheid. Gade (2012) perceives Ubuntu as portraying 'human interdependence, solidarity and communalism' whereas Idoniboye-Obu and Whetho (2013) has a more descriptive definition and have a list of factors that signify the concept which are:

Is the potential for being human.

Is to value the good of community above self-interest.

Is to strive to help people in the spirit of service.

Is to show respect to others and to be honest and trustworthy.

Ubuntu regards humanity as an integral part of the eco-systems that lead to a communal responsibility to sustain life.

Ubuntu shares natural resources on a principle of equity among and between generations.

Ubuntu is fair to all.

Ubuntu is compassionate.

Ubuntu is a collective respect for human dignity.

Ubuntu refers to people.

Ubuntu is one of the things that you recognize when you experience it.

This can then support the statement that it is 'all things to all people' whilst also being 'different things to different people.' Bennett (2011) also adds to the argument when he registers the lack of a clear definition of Ubuntu as one of the negative factors of the concept. The author further feels that the concept does not have much use in the contemporary world, that the constitution encapsulates human dignity in anyway, that cohesive privileges create hierarchies which corrupt traditional leadership and that Ubuntu denies an individual his independence.

### What perceptions do we have about Ubuntu?

As a concept, Ubuntu seems to have entered the scene of public discourse in the 1920s when Inkatha, 'a cultural movement', used it in its drive to revive the respect of Zulu values (Bennett, 2011). The emergence of Ubuntu is perceived by Gade (2012) to have taken place in 'African indigenous culture' in 'small-scale communities in pre-colonial Africa'. This assertion is vague and does not provide any knowledge of where the concept emerged. According to Matolino and Kwindingwi (2013) Ubuntu came to be the focus of politics during the 'political liberation, from minority white rule to majority black rule in Zimbabwe and South Africa.

The concept transitioned the apartheid regime and has

found itself as part of a democratic South Africa and has become all things to all people whilst also being different things to different people (Idoniboye-Obu and Whetho, 2013). This transition and existence of Ubuntu in these contemporary times are supported by McDonald (2010) who confirms that Ubuntu has been used by the South African state, academics, private sector and non-governmental organisations post-apartheid, showing that it has become part of contemporary approaches. Nabudere praised the revitalisation of Ubuntu and its integration into the Western world as it provides a sense of identity and respect (Kochalumchu-Vattil, 2010). Ubuntu further plays a huge role in restorative justice and adds value to factors such as independence and responsibility. In its current state, Ubuntu is perceived to be an ideology, a worldview, a philosophy, ethic, mindset, culture and doctrine, that being so, its definition can be said to be evasive.

Mabovula (2011) also perceives Ubuntu as a fundamental ontological and epistemological category in the African thought whilst also defining it as an African value system. McDougal (2013) also observes that Ubuntu is an African philosophy which extends the person to others through the affirmation of their humanity. York (2014) perceives it as defining the unified and interconnected existence of Africans which is characterised by 'love, caring, tolerance, respect, empathy, accountability and responsibility.

Although Ubuntu is, to a large extent, perceived in a positive light, there are also negative factors which are attached to Ubuntu by other authors. Bennett (2011) argues that there is a lack of a clear definition of the concept; that it does not have much use in the contemporary world; that the constitution encapsulates human dignity in anyway, that cohesive privileges create hierarchies which corrupt traditional leadership and that ubuntu denies an individual his independence. Keevy (2009) perceives it as personifying patriarchy and being oppressive to African women. The patriarchal hierarchy of Ubuntu which is depicted below, is believed to be based on an individual's status and to embrace the spiritual and the living dimensions as seen to be existing in African communities (Figure 1).

If patriarchy is at the centre of Ubuntu and since Ubuntu is found in all disciplines in the community, patriarchy would therefore manifest itself in all spheres of the community including their livelihood. It would then drive all the disciplines including the economy of the area and the political realm which might be reflected in how women are involved in the governance structures and their participation in decision making processes within these structures. Mapaire (2011) however raises an issue which could be perceived as counter patriarchy when he states that central to Ubuntu is the value of 'human dignity' and that any treatment that is 'degrading' cannot be said to encapsulate Ubuntu.

This therefore raises a question on Ubuntu and its

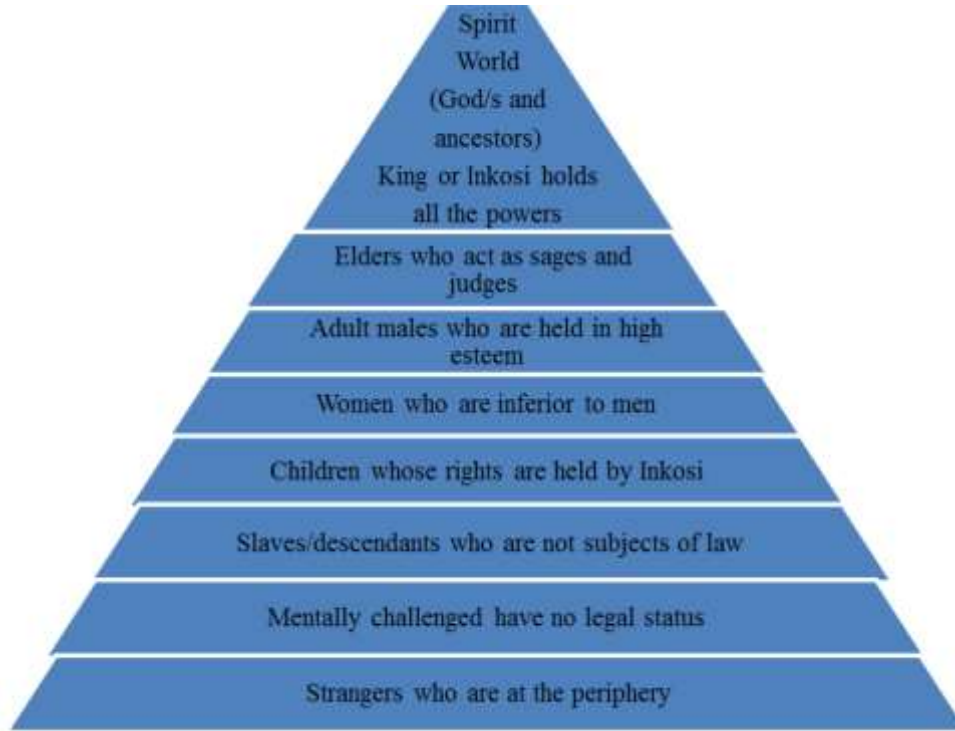
character, can it indeed be said to be patriarchal or is it grounded in treating people in a respectful and equitable manner void of class or gender? Taking from the definitions of Ubuntu that have been presented earlier, none have shown the perceived inherent discriminatory practices that can be found in Ubuntu, especially since Ubuntu is concerned about the group and its wellbeing rather than the individual. When one also reviews the definition which perceives Ubuntu to have elements of helpfulness, respect, equity and fairness amongst others, it therefore is unfathomable that Ubuntu will also consist of elements of patriarchy. Ubuntu and the related concepts are also largely dependent on the individual and how he views himself in relation to the community and how he perceives his identity. The manner in which a person views himself can transcend to how he perceives himself and his role within the group which can be influenced by his personality and character. This can then result in a person with a negative perception of himself and his role feeling that Ubuntu is patriarchal.

### Is Ubuntu limitless?

As it presents itself in African philosophy, African value system, African worldview, culture and having its tentacles in the way that people live and behave, can Ubuntu be contained? Can we make any claims of understanding it fully? More to the point, can people of KwaZulu-Natal claim to know what it is and does it even exist in the area credited for its initiation? Ubuntu is found in various African cultures and languages. Below is a table depicting Ubuntu in other African languages (Table 1).

The existence of Ubuntu equivalents in other African languages bears testimony that it resonates within Africa and its people. There is however a notion by Gade (2012) that the meanings of these African equivalent terms have not been 'sufficiently investigated' and that there is a possibility of the terms having evolved over the years. One could also pose the question if 'humanness' as a seemingly accepted English equivalent of Ubuntu has been 'sufficiently investigated'.

Grainger et al. (2010) present 'humanity' as an English version of Ubuntu when they articulate that the definition of ubuntu as 'humanity' can neglect to give the actual essence of 'an ethical system concerned with the connectedness of each human being to others.' This then shows that there are also doubts about the English definition of Ubuntu. If so, does 'humanity' or 'humanness' give a proper reflection of Ubuntu as an African philosophy or does it use a Westernised lens on a concept that is grounded on the African worldview? If humanness or humanity has not been 'sufficiently investigated' as a Westernised version of Ubuntu, why should the African equivalents be 'sufficiently investigated', especially when all these concepts are



**Figure 1.** Ubuntu and patriarchy (Adapted from: Keevy, 2009).

**Table 1.** Ubuntu in other African languages.

Country	Language	Ubuntu equivalent
Kenya	Kikuyu; Kimeru	Umundu; Umuntu
Tanzania	kiSukuma; kiHaya	Bumuntu
Mozambique	shiTshonga; shiTswa	Vumuntu
Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)	Bobangi	Bomoto
DRC and Angola	kiKongo; giKwese	giMuntu
Zimbabwe	Shona	Unhu

Adapted from: (Idoniboye-Obu and Whetho, 2013).

grounded on the African worldview and epistemology which transcends borders and culture. This could then show a colonialist attitude that African knowledge has to go through certain stages which are grounded in Westernised epistemology to be accepted.

In addition, McDonald (2010) highlights the simplicity and the complexity of defining Ubuntu. 'It is simple in the sense that its general meaning and spirit are broadly understood in common practice and parlance throughout most parts of the continent. It is complex in the sense that there is no easy or direct translation to English, and there are unresolved debates about its ontological status.' English translations are said to include 'humanness', 'I am because you are', 'a person is a person because of others' and 'a spirit of neighbourliness'

amongst others.

It is however not only that Ubuntu exists in other countries as suggested by the existence of the philosophy in other African languages but it can also be linked to other concepts in various contexts which are central to communal efficacy and Africanness. Alcoff (2011) perceives a connection between Ubuntu and 'linked fate' which is a belief by African Americans that what happens in your community has an effect on you. Other concepts which are associated with Ubuntu are communitarianism, African communalism and kinship (Mabovula, 2011). Whereas communitarianism is defined as a philosophical viewpoint which focuses its definition on an individual in terms of the social bonds and traditions rather than personal characteristics, communalism has its focus on

the group and gives a perspective on 'collective existence and intersubjectivity' of humanity and how this creates a source for 'supportiveness, cooperation, collaboration and solidarity' (Mabovula, 2011).

Masolo (2012) however warns that communalism does not mean that 'people ought to share everything' as an element of individualism still needs to be maintained to allow for, amongst others, intelligence and creativity. According to the author, it is the belief of communitarians that since individualism is learned, so can caring and their drive is for an environment which nurtures a 'good society'. Mabovula (2011) however also presents the notion of kinship which he perceives to be a state where an individual aligns his interests pertaining to various issues of existence and wellbeing to those of the group. When doing so, *philia*, which is another concept presented by Masolo (2012), plays a role. *Philia* is aptly defined as 'getting along with others'. All these concepts can be linked to Ubuntu because their main element lies in the prioritisation of group cohesion and the needs of the group over individualism.

Negritude, a philosophy which is defined by its originator Senghor as '... the whole of the values of civilization – cultural, economic, social and political – which characterize the ..... Negro African World.' (Mapaure, 2011) can also be perceived as another view which has ties with Ubuntu. The link between the two philosophies, Ubuntu and Negritude, can be perceived in terms of Ubuntu also being seen as a value system or a philosophy that transcends all disciplines and which characterises the African community.

The existence of Ubuntu in communities seems to be a positive influence which brings communities together for common good. It also influences every aspect of the community and seems to be a common factor that could potentially go over indigenous boundaries and communities. The importance of the community amongst African societies, especially in light of Negritude, African communalism and kinship; cannot be seen only as resultant from Ubuntu but as a sum total of other philosophical or epistemological influences. The focus of every interaction in the African philosophy would then be valued in terms of its impact on the community, which can make Ubuntu's influence seem inexhaustible.

## METHODOLOGY

### What does KZN say about the existence of Ubuntu?

Amazulu are a nation who have a noble history and opulent traditional values, and are currently reconstructing their cultural legacy (Adeyemi, 2012). That being so, the disruption and seizing of practising and development of traditional values in colonised territories is understood to be more acute in KZN. This is supported by Henriques (2013) who perceives the Zulu culture to be rich but, within the same breath, raises a challenge of how this

culture can adapt to a modernised environment.

With culture being perceived to be dynamic, and Amazulu building their cultural legacy which was affected by colonialism and apartheid, the need to investigate how Ubuntu is being perceived in modern KZN was identified. The study conducted was specific to KZN where Ubuntu emerged in light of the influences that have affected cultural values in the African communities. These values were either eroded or changed to fit the modern world. With Ubuntu being a value system and a philosophy, it therefore can be expected that it has been influenced by modernity and even continues to be so.

A qualitative study was conducted in five areas of KZN to investigate if ubuntu still exists in the communities and how it is perceived by them. According to the 2011 census, KZN consists largely of Black Africans who total over 86, 8 million people (Statistics South Africa, 2011). The rest of the population is made up of 1.4 million Coloureds, 7.4 million Indians and 4.2 million Whites. This therefore means that 87% of the population is KZN is made up of Black Africans. Statistics further show that in KZN, 77% of the population speak isiZulu as a mother tongue.

Umgungundlovu has 1 017 763 residents who live in 272 666 households ([www.localgovernment.co.za](http://www.localgovernment.co.za)). The area was chosen for the study because it has a large contingency of rural areas which are divided into deep rural and semi-urban. These areas are governed through a constitutional democracy of South Africa but as part of the rural communities, are under the control of traditional leadership. Rural communities were chosen because these are areas which are grounded in culture and traditions and value the use of indigenous knowledge. There can however be ranges in the use of culture and traditions as deep rural areas are known to be far from towns and far removed from external influences and modernity, whereas semi-urban areas are close to towns and prone to western influences. The study therefore also looked at whether there were variances between the views of the participants from the deep rural areas and those from the semi-urban areas.

Traditional leadership in KZN consists of amakhosi (plural for Inkosi) and Traditional Councils (TCs) as promulgated through, *inter alia*, the Constitution of South Africa (Act 108 of 1996) and the KwaZulu-Natal Traditional Leadership and Governance Framework (Act 5 of 2005). Amakhosi are traditional leaders, known as chiefs a term which, post-democracy, is regarded as colonialist with indigenous terms like Inkosi being used even in literature. Amakhosi have been part of indigenous leadership pre-colonialism, during apartheid and during the democratic rule. Umgungundlovu also has functioning traditional leadership structures with both the Provincial House of Traditional Leaders (PHTL) as well as Umgungundlovu Local House of Traditional Leaders (ULHTL) being housed in Pietermaritzburg.

The study was in the form of a case study, and was

conducted in three deep rural areas of eMathulini with an estimated population of 15 000 individuals, eNhlazuka with 25 000 individuals and eMhlangandlovu with 3 000 individuals; as well as in two semi-urban areas of kwaManyavu which has an estimated population of 27 000 individuals and kwaMpumuza with 65 000 households. These cases were selected through a consultative process with ULHTL.

The study population within these cases consisted of Amakhosi, community members and Traditional Councils. Sampling was conducted through the snowball technique where each Inkosi was made aware of the sampling requirements for the study and appointed a coordinator for his area to arrange, in consultation with the researcher, study participants. The interviews and FG meetings took place in the areas of study. Interviews took one hour whereas FG meetings took two and a half hours. Interviews were conducted with Amakhosi and FGs were conducted with TCs and community members.

Results pertaining to the study are presented below per case as well as per participants. A brief analysis of the results of the study is done after the presentation of each data set from the participants.

### **Area of Emathulini**

Emathulini is a deep rural area near the town of Dalton in the North of KZN. The area consists of 15, 000 people under the leadership of Inkosi. The area is 70 approximately kilometres away from Pietermaritzburg and is deep rural with roads being untarred and problems with basic services being articulated. The people in the area said that there is not much to appreciate about the area because they still did not have services like water and electricity. They however loved to stay there because that is all they know and they are able to live a life where they practice their culture and exercise their different belief systems uninhibited.

### **Data from Inkosi**

According to Inkosi, 'Ubuntu botho' is a value that was taught by the homelands government pre democracy. He felt that ubuntu incorporates a sense of concern for others, being helpful, compassionate and creating peace within the community. These values are still important to Inkosi and, according to him, can still be found in his community. The extent to which they exist however was perceived to have decreased over time and having been affected by the modern lifestyle and the constitutional rights that have been afforded to individuals, especially the youth. From the response of Inkosi, the efforts to instil Ubuntu within communities commenced during the apartheid period with the homelands government, which then supports the notion by certain authors that Ubuntu was initiated by Inkatha. Ubuntu still exists within the Zulu communities but is threatened by contemporary issues.

### **Data from focus groups**

Two FG discussions took place in this area. The first FG perceived Ubuntu as being an important value in the community. According to the participants, it still exists as, 'a neighbour will never go to bed hungry'. It was also said that the community rallied around one another when there is a death in one of families within the community. To the participants, these are signs of Ubuntu where the burden of a family or of a person is shared with the whole group. The FG felt that Ubuntu is slowly losing its significance especially in the younger generation. 'Children are modernised and have lost respect'.

The second FG which consisted solely of youth who perceived Ubuntu as 'bubhanqa zonke izinto ezinhle' - a combination of all positive things. They also confirmed what was highlighted by other FGs in that it consists of respect, but also added 'ukuphila nabanye abantu' - being able to live with others, 'isimilo' - good behaviour, 'ukuchazela omunye umuntu' - being able to explain things to other people and 'ukuziphatha' - how you carry yourself. The youth however felt that ubuntu and other values were slowly losing their importance in the lives of their generation because 'asifuni ukulalela, sesinamalungela' - we do not want to listen, we have rights now. They felt that it is difficult for parents to guide them and to entrench good morals and values through punishment as they would threaten them with incarceration if they beat them.

The constitution was also blamed for the state of affairs as it was felt that it goes against Ubuntu and respect, in support of individuals and their rights, which is the same as what was expressed by Inkosi. The description that Ubuntu as a combination of all positive things adds to perception that 'it is all things to all people.' Both FGs perceived Ubuntu as a positive value which is important in the community.

### **Data from the traditional council**

The traditional council perceived Ubuntu to be 'doing good things for other people' which then shows a value of giving. It means that 'umuntu ungumuntu ngabanye abantu.' - a person is a person through other people. It is about 'helping others.' From the data obtained it would therefore seem that any act of kindness is regarded as Ubuntu.

### **Area of Enhlazuka**

Enhlazuka is a rural area which is located near the small town of Richmond on the outskirts of Pietermaritzburg. It is approximately 70 km from Pietermaritzburg and has an estimated population of 25 000 people. People in the area said that they did not necessarily love the area because of its lack of development and basic services including water. Accessibility to other areas is difficult

especially in rainy season as none of their roads are tarred. They however appreciate the lifestyle that is grounded in traditions and that they are able to plant crops in order to survive. They also like the environment which includes the mountain which they are very proud of.

### Data from Inkosi

Inkosi spoke of ubuntu '*botho*' which he recognised as an overarching traditional value which guides the behaviour of people, especially amaZulu. According to him, ubuntu is a concern for others, helpfulness, compassion and striving for peace. Ubuntu is still important to the community, however, it is getting lost especially with the youth. Ubuntu is seen as being part of the community where it is a value system and has an influence on the way people do things. It is focused on the needs of others, but also ensuring that the person's actions do not cause any strife in the community.

### Data from the focus group (FG)

The FG in the area perceived Ubuntu as humility with the following words used: '*isizotha*' - calm demeanour, '*ukuzehlisa*' - humility, '*ukungaphakami*' – not hold oneself in higher regard than others and '*ukuba nenhliziyo enhle*' - having a good heart or being compassionate. One participant however felt that there is a difference between ubuntu and respect as a person can be respectful but 'not have even a single ounce of ubuntu'. Ubuntu was perceived to go beyond just 'mere respect' but as touching on '*ubuwena*' - your being. It was however stated that although ubuntu still exists in the community, it does not extend to the economical sphere as people are interested in only developing themselves and would not be willing to work with one another where money is involved.

All participants perceived Ubuntu as a value system consisting of various values. The comment however by one of the participants where respect is considered to be an action whereas Ubuntu is seen as being part of a person's character, presents another view which however is not dissimilar to others. Basically, what the participant brought across is that one can fake respect for others, but not ubuntu as it is part of the personality of a person. Ubuntu as a value influences actions and is seen through a person's behaviour or actions. Although Ubuntu is said to influence every aspect of life in the community, however, it did not exist in areas where money is concerned thus meaning that community members can choose whether they exercise Ubuntu and where it will be applicable.

### Area of Emhlangandlovu

The area of Emhlangandlovu is situated near the small

town of Dalton in Northern KZN. The area is about 70 approximately km from Pietermaritzburg, and is estimated to have 3000 people. The people in the area are proud of their area because they are able to live a traditional lifestyle. They however have to contend with daily struggles for lack of services. The lack of water is a 'huge problem' and affects the potential of agriculture in the area. People obtain water from water tanks which are filled 'maybe once a month.' These tanks are few and far from some people. They end up going to the river to fetch dirty water which is also used by livestock. There is no electricity in the area and the terrain for the roads is in a poor state.

### Inkosi

Inkosi in the area felt that there is a great need to take care and protect those who are incapable of taking care of themselves. This to him resonates with Ubuntu which reflects the way he was raised. Ubuntu is paramount to Inkosi as it encapsulates respect and general caring for everyone, irrespective of their social or financial status. According to him however, the constitution has created a situation where Ubuntu has been lost to rights as the focus is on individual rights rather than what is right, what is respectful and generally, 'what would show Ubuntu'. The importance of Ubuntu is shown from the articulations of Inkosi as it is seen as a value that guides the way people live. The perceived patriarchal nature of Ubuntu is negated by the comments of Inkosi who perceives it to be general caring which is void of class, which means that people are treated fairly and equitably. There is however a perceived relationship between Ubuntu and the rights of individuals which are seen as clashing with Ubuntu. This could be resultant from the individualistic nature of rights which places an individual's needs above those of the group.

### Data from the focus group

According to the FG Ubuntu resonates in helping others like '*ukuphana, ukunanelana*' – giving to others and giving food to those who need it, which they said was now difficult to find. Working the soil was also seen as a value related to Ubuntu as, through agriculture, people are able to give their neighbours or whoever is in need, produce from their gardens. 'We like working the soil and it also gives us a chance to share the fruit of our labour with others which is a joy to all.' The good behaviour of '*izintombi*', maidens, is also considered as a value attached to Ubuntu.

*Izintombi*, besides preserving their virginity, are also expected to show Ubuntu to everyone. *Ubuntombi* is not only about virginity, but also about behaviour including humility, respect and helpfulness amongst others. The constitutional values were seen to be incompatible with

traditional values as, according to the participants, respect and Ubuntu is paramount in the Zulu tradition, whereas the constitution gives rights to children which make it difficult to 'control' them and they become susceptible to bad influences.

Caring for others seems to be a prominent element for this FG with ubuntu meaning that people are observant of those who are around them and their circumstances and, where necessary share what they have with them. This requires a spirit of giving as people share their crop as well, not necessarily because the others are in need, but as a practice. Virginity is not regarded as a mere physical trait but as being linked to behavioural traits of intombi including the values of respect, humility which are also found in ubuntu. The negative effect of the constitution was also highlighted where rights were perceived to influence children negatively.

### **Traditional council**

The traditional council in the area perceived Ubuntu to be an important value to the community and to include respect and humility. Modernity was however perceived to have a negative influence on Ubuntu as 'children do not want to listen, they have rights now.' Ubuntu is then tied to the willingness of the person, in this case, children, are to listen to guidance, which, if not done, negatively affects its transmission.

### **Area of KwaManyavu**

KwaManyavu is situated near Cato Ridge, a small industrial area under uMkhambathini Municipality. KwaManyavu is about 45 km away from Pietermaritzburg with a population estimated at 27 000 people. The people in the area said that they love their area because there is a sense of neighbourliness, people know one another and 'we love our neighbours.' Although they have electricity and have main roads which are tarred, the area is contending with water problems which have been ongoing for a number of years. Whereas they used to make a living out of small scale agriculture, this is no longer the case because of lack of infrastructure to support agriculture.

### **Inkosi**

Inkosi held ubuntu in high esteem and felt that it is an important value in the Zulu tradition which continues to guide the interaction of individuals with others. 'Hlonipha abantu nawe qobo' – respect other people, yourself included, Inkosi said. To him, ensuring that women have a voice in his area was part of ubuntu as 'ukuhlonipha kuyefana' – respect is the same. According to Inkosi

'children these days are modernised' but the extent of modernisation is different across 'izigodi'. They take on westernised ways of life which go against ubuntu and the African way of life. Inkosi further articulated that ubuntu means that '*wazisa umuntu oyisahambi, ukuzwelana, ukunanelana, ukulapha izinkomo, intandane ayikho emakhaya, wamukeleka yonke indawo.*' – respect of a stranger, empathy, giving to those who lack, taking care of cows, rural areas do not have orphans and a person would be accepted everywhere.

Ubuntu in this instance is seen as not only general caring for people but also for animals. Cows in the Zulu culture are perceived as wealth and are a man's pride and are also considered to be linked to ancestors and to have the ability to provide behavioural symbols which denote the ancestor's moods. Ubuntu also includes caring for those in need, in this case, orphans. Strangers are also seen as being important and deserve respect, which goes against the patriarchal hierarchy presented in Figure 1 where strangers are placed at the bottom of the hierarchy. The respect that is also said to be afforded to women also challenges patriarchy especially since people in rural areas tend to be loyal to traditional leadership and to respect it. The probability would then be that the community would follow the actions of Inkosi in the treatment of the different groups, including women, within the community. The existence of modernity and its negative influence is recognised although the ranges of the phenomenon are perceived to be different in each area.

### **Focus group**

In the FG, ubuntu was perceived to be a value in the community. In defining ubuntu, the participants said that it relates to '*ukuvuselela inhlonipho, ukusiza abanye, ukunanelana, isihe, ukulekelela umuntu osenkingeni, ukungalwi kodwa ube unawo amandla okulwa noma ungambophi umuntu ngoba ucabangela izingane.*' – restoration of respect, helping others, giving to those who lack, kindness, helping those who are in trouble, not fighting even when you have the strength to fight or not opening a case against a person because you are considering the impact of such on his children. It is however felt that ubuntu is slowly dwindling or is not present in the younger generation. This is caused by the extent to which the youth have accepted the western way of life which goes against the values of ubuntu. With ubuntu being the sum total of various values within the community, it therefore could be a concern that, if the youth stops practicing ubuntu, that could affect the practice of other values as well.

### **Traditional council**

The traditional council defined ubuntu in terms of it



encompassing '*inhlonipho, uzwelo, uthando, isihawu, ubuqotho*'- respect, empathy, love, kindness, being principled. Ubuntu was said to exist in the community and is commonly used, however, it is affected by modernity and the Constitution which affords rights to people.

### Area of Empumuza

Empumuza is an area which is approximately 9 kilometres away from Pietermaritzburg with an estimated population of about 65 000 households. The area has basic services including water and electricity. The main roads are tarred allowing for easy access. The people in the area loved living in the area because it is close to town but that they are also able to live a traditional lifestyle. The transport system was said to be good thus allowing them to travel easily. They are able to bury their family members within their household thus eliminating problems of lack of space in cemeteries which people in towns experience.

### Inkosi

Inkosi perceived 'Ubuntu, botho' as an important component of any community, a way of life. Ubuntu was seen as showing the way people behave and how they socialise. It is still found in the older generation as it had been part of how they were raised, but is slowly losing its importance with the younger generations. Inkosi felt that although there has been development in the area, there is a lack of development of the minds of the people in line with the infrastructural development that has taken place. Ubuntu would also then be part of this development teaching people respect, not only of others but also of self and of the environment which surrounds them. Inkosi sees ubuntu as not relating to people as a group or as individuals only, but also in terms of exercising sustainable development.

### Data from the traditional council (TC)

The TC defined ubuntu as encompassing '*inhlonipho, uzwelo, uthando, isihawu, ubuqotho*'- respect, empathy, love, kindness, being principled. These are prominent in the area but not as much as in the olden days. People no longer do things for others as in the previous years, it could be as a result of economic meltdown, but people are more focused on themselves than on others. The exercising of values in this instance is tied to financial ability. It would be difficult for people to help others even if they wish to if they do not have the means to do so. This then reveals that values and their continuation are negatively affected by the state of the economy in the community.

### Data from the focus group

To the FG, Ubuntu is an important value in the community. This is however slowly dwindling because of westernisation. Ubuntu was perceived to be important and to provide a foundation for respect. The participants described it as '*inhlonipho, ukusizana, ukwazi imvelaphi, ukungahlekani, ukwenza ofisa ukukwenza, ukuzwelana*.' – respect, helpfulness, knowing your roots, not laughing at others, the ability to do what you wish to do, empathy. The FG said that when a person knows his roots he will know his clan names which are part of history and will also familiarise himself with clan names of others in the community. As a show of respect, people do not call each other by names but by their clan names. Another value attached to Ubuntu was of 'doing things without expecting monetary rewards.' With the youth being exposed to various influences, the FG felt that certain values, including Ubuntu and respect, are no longer important to the youth. These however, should be taught to them at home from the young age. Teaching of values is seen as important but also gaining knowledge of each other's history and clan names. This then touches on indigenous knowledge which should be transmitted to younger generations.

### REFLECTIONS FROM THE STUDY

It was the observation of the researcher that the participants struggled to define Ubuntu. This is not because the value is foreign to them or they do not understand it but the concept is so ingrained in their being that defining it has never been required. When defining Ubuntu, different values are used, and these revolve around caring for and respecting others. Respect was the most common value amongst all participants in all cases. When reflecting on this, one also needs to understand the intricacies of African epistemology and that it is not as unpretentious as the Western epistemology. Definitions are then not necessary for knowledge to be considered as such because knowledge is not abstract but perceives various factors including the cosmic world, the interaction with the knowledge and the source of knowledge.

Data from all participants show that Ubuntu still exists in rural KZN and is perceived as an important value system which brings together different values which are important for amaZulu. This is a general finding irrespective of the areas being divided into deep rural and semi-urban. No differences could be found in the responses that differentiate between the two types of areas in the study, neither were there differences based on age. The variation in the rate of development in the cases had no influence on the findings neither was modernity linked to development by any of the participants. There is however a general concern from all

the areas that the use and importance of ubuntu is being affected by modernity, especially amongst youth.

The need to teach Ubuntu within the families and communities which was highlighted by some participants is a worthy intervention. This does not only apply to Ubuntu, but to all indigenous values which still drive modern communities amidst the impact of colonialism, apartheid and other perpetual western influences. A study can be conducted on how various indigenous communities in South Africa preserve their cultural values including Ubuntu.

The responses from the youth FG reflected the same notions on Ubuntu, its importance in the community and also its attrition by modernity, however, the articulation of their unwillingness to listen could impede such efforts. Such articulations raise the impact of the willingness to learn as important in learning. They also perceived punishment and in their case being beaten up as a form of correcting wrong behaviour and instilling good behaviour. Physical punishment is however against the constitution and, in the absence of knowledge of any other form of punishment, parents would then rely on the willingness of their children to learn these values if they are to be successful in such an endeavour. This then impacts on the survival of a community lifestyle which is grounded in Ubuntu and other indigenous values. This could be a topic for further studies where the views of youth on the long term effects of their attitude to cultural values can be investigated.

The views of the participants on the impact of the constitution on ubuntu were surprising in the light of it being generally considered to embrace the spirit of Ubuntu, and it being purported as the best. The Bill of Human Rights however seems to be considered to go against Ubuntu as it elevates rights of individuals and individualism whereas Ubuntu is more concerned about an individual in relation to his community, with its focus being on the community wellbeing. This then reflects the link of Ubuntu to such concepts as communal efficacy and linked fate.

## Conclusion

The need to conduct this study and the choice of area of focus were explained. The question that sought to be addressed was the continued existence of Ubuntu in KZN amidst the impact of modernisation. The study contends that ubuntu still exists, and that it is regarded as a value system in the community. Although its definition ranges across the different cases and even different study participants with different values being attached to its definition, its importance as a value system amongst amaZulu in the KZN communities cannot be over-emphasized. It can indeed be a sum of all positive behaviour of people in the area which needs to be harnessed in order to build generations of people who will strive for harmony, peace and co-existence. The

responsibility of transmission of the values of ubuntu lies with families, the immediate community as well as external roleplayers including government and its institutions as the makers of law which affect communities and their values. The influence of Ubuntu can assist in addressing contemporary issues in different areas for the benefit of the country at large.

## Conflict of Interests

The author has not declared any conflict of interests.

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