

**The visual narrative relating to social  
performance of the Xhosa people during burial**

By

**SIPHE POTELWA**

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**SUPERVISOR: DR NP MPAKO**

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## DECLARATION

I declare that THE VISUAL NARRATIVE RELATING TO SOCIAL PERFORMANCE OF THE XHOSA PEOPLE DURING BURIAL is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S. A. M. M.', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

February 2016

## **SUMMARY**

### **The visual narrative relating to social performance of the Xhosa people during burial**

This study critiques the extravagant behaviour associated with burial practises of modern Xhosa people, with special focus on the Eastern Cape of South Africa. It uses human altruism, cultural conformism, and cooperative behaviour as the theories to explain why people do things they consider to be the norm or do things in a prescribed way, in order to be accepted by a cultural group or class. The artworks which form part of this study are informed through interviews with key informants who are members of the community, as well as the writer's observations during modern burial events. These artworks portray the obsessive behaviour associated with extravagant funerals, illustrated through repetition, layering, and the multiplicity of cultural objects, such as coffins, candles, pots and other items.

### **KEY WORDS**

Altruism; Burial culture; conformism; cooperative behaviour; social performance; Xhosa

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## **DEDICATION**

To my Brothers, Sisters, and late Parents.

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## **CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION**

My research and visual component critiques the extravagance associated with the funerals of close relatives as practised by the modern Xhosa people, with special focus on the Eastern Cape of South Africa. In this study, I have used cooperative behaviour as a concept to explain why people cooperate by doing things that they consider to be the norm or an accepted way of doing things. Sometimes they do this in order to be accepted within a cultural group or class with particular regard to social performance in cultural conformity. To substantiate my argument I have applied the concept of cooperative behaviour and conformity as described by Boyd and Richerson (1982) and Henrich and Boyd (2001) to engage with this social phenomenon and, in particular, to ascertain why people cooperate and conform to certain standards. In simple terms, cooperative behaviour is an activity in which people work or act together in groups for the common or mutual benefit of individuals within that group (Boyd and Richerson, 1982). In this study I suggest that extravagant performance at Xhosa burials may be as a result of the need for individuals to be favourably accepted in their immediate community.

Xhosa burial practices in the 21<sup>st</sup> century present strong performative qualities, evident in the required actions and bearings of the bereaved. This is enforced by visual imagery of large investment in extravagant and lavish burial caskets, flowers, catering and clothes to mention just a few. The burial ceremony now takes on theatrical qualities, using stage and props to beg social acceptance for the bereaved, and played out to a highly critical audience. The practical component of this study produces visual evidence of both the conformist and non-conformist characters who are involved in social performance at these Xhosa burials. It highlights and parodies the actions of the chief mourner, bound by societal constrictions but involved in a performance that must meet the requirements of the audience. Failure to do so may result in cruel gossip and being ostracised by the community. The visual presentation comprises

installations that employ photography, digital manipulation, sculpture and assemblage to document the obsessive situations of those involved in these burial rituals, whether in a situation of conformity or during an act of social performance.

## **1.1 CONTEXTUAL BACKGROUND**

This study recognises the characteristics of performativity involved in cultural rituals within the modern Xhosa society, such as the burial of the dead, and questions the requirements needed for such performance. The interpretation and standards of acceptability that justify acts of performance within the social constructs of society are brought into question by the yardsticks laid down by the community as to what is materially acceptable or not, and whether the bereaved, who may or may not be the chief mourner, has stepped up to the plate in terms of the 'staging' of the burial ritual. Interpretations are explored in the practical element of this study, namely the characteristic requirements of performance, the keeping up of appearances, the enormous effort expended in maintaining the extravagance and over-indulgence, the fear of social punishment that may occur should the burial be 'under par'.

Burial ceremonies in modern Xhosa communities have become a lucrative haven for industries that have made death their prime concern. These industries include funeral parlours, burial societies, catering and decor, florists, photographic and video production, to mention only a few. An article published in City Press by Radinku (25-07-1999) entitled "Quality funerals captivate clients" stated:

Funeral planning is becoming one of the modes of life to most urban and rural people. People are always attracted to fancy funeral services that have become part of life. The sorrow and joy of a funeral service may be captured by means of a video camera and high quality funeral undertakers.

The expenses that go towards lavish burials are in contrast to the modest practices of old Xhosa/African traditions of paying ones last respects in a dignified manner to honour the departed. During the pre-colonial period, burial ceremonies were simple and inexpensive, possibly because there were no funeral parlours. Families therefore were required to dispose of their loved ones with the help of neighbouring community members. We know from history that black people were spending far less money on burials, compared with today. Issues of civilisation, erosion of traditions and the evolution of culture are all reasons for these changes.

This simple practice continued until a wave of Western civilisation interfered. Almost all remote areas became accessible through the building of roads and highways, whilst rural communities had newfound access to clinics and hospitals. The improvement in infrastructure enabled rural communities to take their loved ones for medical attention, thus reducing the number of home fatalities. While this change in circumstance has brought progressive facilities to the Xhosa people, it has, however, added new challenges, manifested in cooperative human behaviour and cultural conformism. It is only recently, since the all-encompassing influences of westernisation, that burials have become expensive and turned into public events or celebrations. Nowadays funeral ceremonies are referred to as 'the celebration of a life' rather than the mourning of a loved one, as previously practised.

An informant in this study stated:

*In the olden days when a loved one died he/she was mourned for a period of a year. If it is a father of a family and it was a 'must' that the house has to be covered in dark coloured soil and the whole family, especially the wife, would wear black clothes for a year and the children a black button for at least six months. It is only after this period that the family could start celebrating the life of the deceased and this was done after a ceremony called 'ukubuyiswa' meaning bringing the spirit home. The bringing of the spirit home means that the deceased is now ready to be called an ancestor hence he/she is brought home to watch over the living (one of this study's informant).*

To this end I refer to my own experience of Xhosa burial practice. After my father's death, my mother wore black clothes, and my siblings and I had our hair shaved. We wore buttons which were covered in black cloth. All these rituals lasted for a period of one year, after which the 'ukubuyiswa' ceremony took place where an ox was slaughtered, and our father's clothes distributed as tokens of remembrance, first among the children, and then to the extended family. During the year of mourning his clothes were packed away in suitcases. Prior to the distribution of my father's clothes, a ritual was performed in which a portion of the bile juice and blood from the slaughtered ox was mixed with water and sprinkled with a branch of a tree over the clothes. This ceremony was marked by happiness, and, for the first time, we were allowed to make jokes about our father, something which was not allowed during the yearlong mourning period.

An informant in this research stated that:

*When the body of the deceased is believed to be still recognisable if it could be excavated, Africans believe that the deceased has to be respected by mourning his/her death; hence his/her clothes have to be kept in a safe place as a sign of respect (one of this study's informant).*

There was a gap of a decade (1998-2008) between the deaths of my parents, and I have since observed various forms of Xhosa burial practices some of which I consider to be a burden on the bereaved family's economic status and general wellbeing. Ballim (2013: 3) attests that this distortion may be linked to the lack of education which should have been shared from generation to generation regarding the history of burial practices and rituals associated with the Xhosa customs. This is a major factor that could well be propelling people towards conformity, easily adopting and adapting to whatever alternative social practice is available and acceptable. This is exemplified in the adoption of modern lifestyle practices in Xhosa communities, practices that were previously alien to Xhosa traditions, and very often, completely irrelevant to Xhosa custom. This is not to say that all modern inclusions in Xhosa burial practice

are negative in terms of social performance, but the interpretation and application of these inclusions often take on a distorted view of what the performance should be. The modern inclusions therefore, are an important determining factor in this issue.

A Sunday Times (31-08-2003) article by Rowan Philip entitled 'Funerals spell financial suicide: Township families go deep into debt by hosting lavish burials' confirmed this adherence to modern lifestyle practices during funerals by making the point that, "if you don't have salads and delicious things, then the funeral is regarded as lousy". Another explanation for the conformity may be the fear of being ostracised or being labelled 'poor' as no one wants his/her event to be called 'lousy'.

According to a pilot household income and expenditure study in Soweto, which was funded by foreign aid agencies, including US-AID, township families are choosing funerals that cost 3 to 5 times more than the entire household's monthly income. Compiled by Johannesburg economist, Veni Naidu, the study shows that low-income families had spent an average of R9008 just on formal expenses for 35 funerals between September 2002 to January 2003 – with just over 30% paid from household savings and 40% from "family and friends" (Sunday Times: August 2003)

The advent of the burial society, on the other hand, is synonymous with the old Xhosa alliances – in place to help one another, especially during needy times and circumstances, or, as the popular way of putting it, 'the rainy days'. "*Ndwandwe*" is a generic term used by Xhosa traditional women, and is a call for other women to assist one another. It simply means "come and help me. I need your help and will also help you when you need mine" (my translation). Another alliance is called "*ilima*" which means "anyone, men, women children, come and help me plough or harvest my fields and I will do the same when you call upon me" (my translation) (Key informant from Mount Frere). During these calls for assistance the host, or the person who called for help, prepares a meal so that the helping hands can eat and enjoy each other's company. Katharine (1977: 72-73), on burial societies states that:

In earlier centuries, death was a problem to be shared. But these days, there are compensations of course. These forms of financial assistance are very valuable; money can't solve problems, but poverty can make them much worse.

Burial societies have become popular amongst most rural and township communities. Their main function is to assist people who cannot afford burial insurance savings with the big insurance companies. They cleverly simulate this function in a more affordable way and with less stringent saving measures. Clients are usually pensioners, men and women who depend on social grants for survival, and at the same time are saving for their burials. Most burial societies established by Xhosa people of the Eastern Cape are similar to the traditional alliances such as '*ndwandwe*' and '*ilima*', as mentioned above. Through these societies, poor people can at least afford and accommodate a number of people expected to attend the funeral. There has, however, been a rise in hybrid burial societies. Many of these are unscrupulous money-making organisations preying on the poor and elderly, hence Katharine's (1977: 72-73) statement that "money can't solve problems, but poverty can make them (problems) much worse".

These hybrid burial societies, or commercial enterprises, seem often more intent on a healthy profit than rendering a service to their members. In our capitalist system, showing a healthy turnover from death is not a surprise. However, this commercialisation is proving to be detrimental to the spirit of *Ubuntu*, the cherished philosophy wherein community members take it upon themselves to assist the bereaved family. Traditional Xhosa burials were solemn events showing deep respect for the departed. The situation, however, has changed alarmingly. It is now common practice at modern burial ceremonies to see the local burial society advertising, promoting and marketing its products to an attentive audience. In perpetuating this format, burial events have become commercial havens. An article by Radinku published by City Press (25-07-1999) confirms this marketing format:

[W]orking closely with their clients, it was easy for this business to take an accelerated growth. Now they are operating from ten branches including their Benoni headquarters.

In the same article (City Press 25-07-1999), the chairperson of Sokudela Undertakers is quoted saying, “the capacity of our operations is now very extensive. In our eight years of operations we strive for quality and it has paid”.

According to a key informant, Xhosa burial ceremonies used to be solemn and dignified up until the “white God” infiltrated societies (Stubbs, 1978: 65). Stubbs remarks (1978: 65), “the ‘white God’ is synonymous with colonisation”, and that “whenever colonisation sets in with its dominant culture it devours the native culture and leaves behind a bastardised culture” (Stubbs, 1978: 46). The Free Dictionary (2015) defines “bastardised” as “to change something so that its value declines”. Most burial societies established by Xhosa people of the Eastern Cape now include the so-called “bastardised” or hybrid burial societies. This is in total opposition to traditional burial societies, known as “*masincedane*” or “*masibambisane*” – meaning “let us help one another” or, “*khanyisa*” meaning “give light or show us the way”. The hybrid societies are run by funeral parlours and burial societies solely for commercial purposes. If a member should default on his/her monthly contributions, the penalties can be harsh, including forfeiting monies already paid over.

The meanings of the names of traditional burial societies epitomise the African saying that ‘*umntu ngumtu ngabantu*’, loosely translated as “a person is a person because of other people”. Not surprisingly, the commercial element associated with progress as well as cooperative cultural behaviour has somehow minimised the impact of this African expression among modern Xhosa societies. This study finds its impetus in the paradox between so-called progress and the non-altruistic behaviour emanating from pressured cultural cooperation within some modern Xhosa people of the Eastern Cape Province.

## **1.2 THE RATIONALE AND THE PURPOSE FOR THE STUDY**

The rationale behind this study emanates from observations that inform how some families find themselves incurring excessive burial costs under duress of a requirement to perform. These reasons are extensive. They include pressure from relatives and/or neighbours who see lavish funeral practice as the expected norm, irrespective of whether the bereaved family can afford it or not. It may also be the result of the sudden availability of funds from the deceased's insurance or burial society. These funds could well be the only means available for the future survival of the bereaved relatives. The inability of the bereaved family to make informed decisions about how to spend the suddenly available funds can be both stressful and overwhelming. The family may desperately need the money to survive, but the neighbours and community wait in anticipation for the burial event. If funds had been saved by the deceased during his or her lifetime, the loved ones in their time of loss may feel obliged to follow the norm in honouring the dead, without thinking of the consequences or the future. Inherited wealth is depleted to fulfil social performance without any regard to the financial situation of survivors and offspring, many of whom are young children finding themselves without any assistance.

Lavish burials of contemporary Xhosa people include expensive funeral parlour costs, a casket, transportation of the body, tent, funeral programmes, the burial setup at the grave, chairs with covers and ties (as shown in Figs 1.1 to 1.6), wreaths, catering for community members at home before and after the funeral, clothing and transportation for close relatives, and, in some cases, the tombstone.



**Figure 1.1:** Siphe Potelwa, The set up inside the hall for the burial service, photograph 2014



**Figure 1.2:** Siphe Potelwa Tent Décor and table set-up for serving food, photograph, 2015

When comparing the décor between Figs 1.1 and 1.2, it is evident that they are of a different economic class. Both the families of Figs.1.1 and 1.2 reside in the same neighbourhood, yet it can be seen from the difference in quality of the two interiors that the amount of money available to the two families was not the same, and that the family with the décor in Fig 1.1 may have felt compelled to provide it in order to belong in the same league as the neighbours.

The question is, “Why do it in the first place if you cannot afford it?” I would argue that it is the pressure of maintaining social order that propels this behaviour, forcing the bereaved to do the most they can, whether practical or not. The rationale in undertaking this research is to highlight stereotypes associated with social cooperation and to raise awareness, questioning the motives that burden the economically disadvantaged. This study argues that dignity and contentment are viable qualities in active social performance and that one has to act according to one’s economic means and not be pressurised by what is expected by society.



**Figure 1.3: Siphe Potelwa, Burial service in the tent before burial at the grave-yard, photograph, 2015**



**Figure 1.4: Siphe Potelwa, The grave is ready for the burial, photograph, 2015**



**Figure 1.5: Siphe Potelwa, The chairs for the chief mourners or bereaved family, photograph, 2015**



**Figure 1.6: Siphe Potelwa, The tomb stone immediately after the burial, photograph, 2015**

This study was inspired by my personal experience as an observer of the extreme lavishness at many funerals I have attended, and my involvement in the burial rituals during the loss of my parents. The personal interest stemmed from the time during and after the deaths of both of my parents, a painful time for me, and my siblings. My father was the sole bread-winner, the family reliant on him for day-to-day survival. We suffered even more after my mother's death in 2008, ten years later. The first experience of suffering was as a result of the pressure from uncles and aunts who insisted on an expensive burial for my father. This had a catastrophic result for my eldest brother who was forced to drop out of school in order to take over the role of my father since our mother was a full-time housewife. When our mother died, my siblings and I felt we would be undervaluing our mother's efforts if we did not show-off by honouring her with a lavish burial as we had done with our father. This time, however, the pressure was not from my mother's brothers, sisters and neighbours alone, but also from amongst us, the children.

Issues of obligation and obsession are also examined as points of interest, spurring on the continuation of lavish and ostentatious behaviour associated with these burials. An example of this is the obligation we felt to honour our mother with the erection of a tombstone at the time of her death, in spite of debates and reasoning. The compulsion to conform in these situations often outweighs rational argument with regards to a person's economic capacity. During my mother's funeral I tried my level best to convince my siblings to eliminate unnecessary expenses, such as delaying the installation of the tombstone until we were all working and were in a position to spare funds to honour our mother, but I was outvoted and forced to conform to the general consensus, and the tombstone was erected at the same time as the burial, as is now the norm. The arguments between both my siblings and close family members that led to the erection of my mother's tombstone, seemed very much like obsessive behaviour to me, and was a direct result of trying to make an impression, trying to please, trying to conform.

These situations are not specific to my own experience but are a general trend among modern Xhosa communities. The arguments included: "this is what is being done in our day and we did it with our father, why not our mother?" or "this cannot wait as I want my sister's tombstone to be done before I die", as was said by my aunt; and other unnecessary reasons. The acquisition of a tombstone for my mother led to my brother and I being compelled to take out a loan from micro-lenders, popularly known as "*omatshonisa*", directly translated from Xhosa meaning "towards bankruptcy". The term is a result of the high interest rates the micro-lenders demand, ranging from 20% to sometimes 35% per month, and having a considerable negative impact on the bereaved families after the funeral events. According to Hilton (2012) in Europe, the Celts were known for making caskets out of flat stones beginning in the 8<sup>th</sup> century. Prior to Westernisation, none of this would have occurred. A cow was slaughtered; its skin wrapped around the body of the deceased, and the tombstone was a simple stone from the valley to demarcate the existence of the grave of a

particular person. Contemplating this plain and dignified way of departure, it is almost incomprehensible how the burial ritual has changed. In place of a ritual of respect, we are now confronted with performance of bizarre proportions.

This study views the pressures of conformity shown in cooperative behaviour among Xhosa communities during burial events as problematic. This is because it is the justification of a social ideology of coerced/forced altruism which can be interpreted as irresponsible generosity. This irresponsible generosity has lasting negative impacts on the people involved. Ghiselin (1974: 247) claims:

No hint of genuine charity ameliorates our vision of society, once sentimentalism has been laid aside. What passes for cooperation turns out to be a mixture of opportunism and exploitation. Scratch an altruist, and watch a hypocrite bleed.

Altruism is defined as “personal sacrifice on behalf of others” (Gintis, Bowles, Boyd & Fehr 2003: XXX). Gintis et al. (2003: 153) further asserts that “what appears to be altruism is really just long-run self-interest”. In addition Gintis et al. (2003: 154) explain that “recent experimental research has revealed forms of human behaviour involving interaction among unrelated individuals that cannot be explained in terms of self-interest”. They call this tendency “strong reciprocity” (Gintis 2000; Henrich and Boyd 2001) where people cooperate with others to avoid punishment associated with the violation of the norm and hoping that they will be positively appraised. Thus the type of forced altruism meaning pressure to the chief mourner observed during burial performances could be summed up as irresponsible generosity carried out as a trade-off in anticipation of acceptance to a social class.

One might attribute the reference to ‘giving’ as being part of Xhosa burial culture, but herein lies a hitch, in that the ‘giving’ is mandated and carries consequence and motive. This is enforced by the obligation to show loyalty to the deceased, it is bound by the relationship and the need for conformity, not solely for the social survival of the bereaved, but also the memory of the

deceased. The study questions whether this submission by members of a society to certain social performances is not a factor of controlled individual progression that, in the broader view, affects the overall development of that society.

The study references these processes of modern Xhosa funerals through Goffman's theory of social performance (1959: 16-24) which sets life as a stage with metaphors of the theatre in the extrapolation of activities that come together to stage a burial event in all its extravagance and lavishness. The research also looks at how social orientation creates a mind-set of prejudice regarding how burial events should be held, as opposed to other ideologies in an overall worldview that do not particularly harm the bereaved. These ideologies include being buried the following day in secret with only a handful of the elders present (Fontein, 2011: 708). This favours the decency and dignity of burial by elders. There is also the idea of "an individual saving towards the possibility of his or her own demise" to assist his or her loved ones that will be bereaved by his or her loss (Paul, 2007: 142).

### **1.3 THE OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

In researching the obsession, extravagance, and lavishness prevalent in the burial of close relatives among Xhosa people of the Eastern Cape, I hope to highlight the forced altruism or "strong reciprocity" involved in adhering to the pressurised conformity of cooperative behaviour with regard to such burial rituals (Gintis, 2000; Henrich and Boyd, 2001). Tooby and Cosmides (1996) define altruism as being "a design to benefit others at a cost to oneself". In this study forced altruistic behaviour or misguided extravagance is associated with obedience by the bereaved family to accepted burial practices even though their economic status does not allow for such expenditure. In addition I examine the impact and influence of social conformity on the mourners and bereaved of the deceased. Human cooperation, conformity, obsession, and forced altruism / strong reciprocity concepts are unpacked to explain what might be the cause of extravagant burials as common social behaviour and

performance among modern Xhosa people. Finally, the research compares traditional burial practices with contemporary practices, elucidating reasons for the vast differences, in particular the ostentatious nature of burial.

Traditional burial practices are associated with the pre-colonial period, including those still being practised by indigenous people who have had minimal contact with the Western way of life and are content with their traditions. Most of these indigenous people are found in remote and rural areas of the Eastern Cape. Contemporary burial practices, on the other hand, refer to those characterised by the lavishness which has become part and parcel of modern black South African culture. The traditional customs of Xhosa burials and the economic challenges facing the family, the community, and the country during burial, are also discussed.

In this study Xhosa funeral events are viewed as a presentation of shows of mourning where the bereaved is expected to engage in social performance, whilst at the same time incurring large financial responsibilities. Funerals are set up to fulfil the community's idea of a proper farewell for the deceased. This requires subjection to cooperative behaviour to fulfil social requirements, where noncompliance results in punishment through social rejection.

#### **1.4 ARTISTIC INFLUENCE AND CREATION PROCESS**

Artists of interest in my research are Dutch-born Stefan Belderbos and South African artists Steven Cohen and Credo Mutwa, and Congolese artist Sammy Baloji. Belderbos (born in 1967), whose work focuses on religious rituals of liturgy, seeks to shock with his performance, portraying a sacred icon, some might consider, in a blasphemous way. His performance is out there, in one's face, no holds barred. Cohen (born in 1962) whose approach to the promulgation of gay identity through masquerade in public performance, draws the attention of society. Cohen is flamboyant and dark, flaunting his ambivalent sexuality in the face of society. Mutwa (born in 1921) focuses on the sustenance and maintenance of African culture customs as a symbol of

people's well-being. Mutwa cherishes the idea of traditional practice. Baloji (born in 1978) manipulates photography by superimposing old and modern scenes on an image in his depiction of the industrial and cultural heritage of his home region of Katanga. These four artists have all influenced my work, either in an aesthetic, practical or symbolic way.

My artwork examines the process of burial practice and performance in our communities on a positive/negative basis in order to learn about and experience its fears and expectations. I have employed a mix of realist and magical-realist techniques that allows me to approach the topic from a distance and examine the reverberations of the past in the present. My practical work explores the changes in ritual practice and burial performance, and asks, perhaps, if we could see families building coffins from materials that have not previously been used to alleviate the high costs of caskets. The figurative coffins of the Ga tribe of southern Ghana spring to mind, where coffins often symbolise the deceased's professional or social standing and are produced and painted in shapes of cars, lions, piano, etc. Other observations concur that communities following ostentatious burials do not help bereaved families to resolve their grief, but instead promulgate the obsession with conformity, using masquerade and performance to hold on to the importance of honouring the dead.

I have used ceramic sculpture, installation and photography as representational of a contemporary family's approach to contemporary burial, and how this approach differs from past traditional funeral practice. I also examine the current influences on those involved. In my field work, I interviewed several community members and friends seeking their views and experiences regarding the reasons for these extravagant burials. During these interviews most of the reasons speculated under the rationale above were confirmed.

My practical work focuses on the traditions of Xhosa people, and the juxtaposition in respect of death, condolence, and the consolation of families

wracked with grief. In addition, I seek to present insight into the cultural ideologies that might be influencing the extravagant burials.

## **CHAPTER TWO: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

In this chapter I explore social performance as a determinant for the actions of those involved in the prescribed activities of Xhosa burial practice. I refer to theories relating to human cooperation, conformity, obsession, and altruism in relation to social behaviour and performance during these practices. The role of social performance is highlighted as a major factor in the institutionalisation of cooperative behaviour in these modern Xhosa social groups. Tendencies of extravagance, obsession, and forced altruistic behaviours during the conducting of traditional burial and death-cleansing ceremonies have been observed.

### **2.1 SOCIAL PERFORMANCE**

Social performance is a process of activity in which a person carries out his or her roles within the social environment in various classifications such as at work, within the family, as a citizen, or even as a friend. Goffman (1959: 65-66) defines social performance as all activities of a given participant which in some way serve to influence other participants. This presents as an activity of social relationship and suggests that a person can influence or demonstrate his or her personal ideologies within other people's lives. In the case of Xhosa burials, it is the reverse, in that the participation of others affects the performance of the individual involved.

In Xhosa burial practices, social performance involves the manipulation of the bereaved person or family rather than the bereaved person exerting influence over the community or onlookers. Instead of the person manipulating the perception of others, society manipulates how the person performs in appearance and ambiance. Here the bereaved is forced to conform to a prescribed performance, social survival being the prize at the end. This is perceived as 'dancing to the communities tune'.

In relation to reality as performance, Goffman (1959) leans towards the idea of dramaturgy in his own relations of how people interact in life. In this, the individual is ascribed with qualities of an actor playing a part. This is much the same as the bereaved in a Xhosa community who are required to honour the deceased in a set piece, demanded by the community. This can be likened to a performance in the theatre if the activities in these social events are viewed as though they were part of a stage production (Macionis and Gerber, 2010:133).

The act of performance in itself is a viable ground for seminal discourse on communication in cultural events such as burial rituals (Bauman and Briggs, 1990) or in the navigation of more mundane daily interactions. As such it can be referenced as a means of discourse that generates social phenomena that is ordered and structured through performance itself (Butler, 1993). In attributing the burial ritual process as performance, actions and activities are staged with identifiable characters each with their own role, who interact within the duration of the event (Singer, 1972). This is much like the Xhosa burial process that operates within a distinctive timeframe to allow for participation of the bereaved, and to engage in interaction with the community.

According to Jeffrey, Alexander, Mast, and Giesen (2006: 232) and Wood (1991: 66), performance is not simply performance but a portrayed logic of interpretive outcomes. In the context of a discussion on cooperative social performance and the outcomes of cooperative behaviour, the Xhosa burial practice as social performance satisfies the dictates of the required burial activities. It is usually what is expected that is performed, and not necessarily what the bereaved wishes or desires to happen.

According to Jeffrey *et al.* (2006: 232), social performance needs to combine metaphors within narrative with metonyms within the text, so that performance is not simply performance. This is done by pointing to the dramaturgical

problems that performers face, situations they are entrapped in, or run into without recognising. This is indicative of the Xhosa performance expectations in burials. The bereaved finds himself or herself “entrapped” by the requirements of extravagance and altruism that modern social ideology dictates. He or she is unable to express wishes or desires, and is culturally and emotionally blackmailed into fulfilling the needs of the community.

Jeffrey *et al.* (2006: 232) and Boyd and Richerson (1982) infer that humans are not solely self-interested and that, in making choices, individuals balance changes in their welfare against change in the welfare of others. In simple words they like to imitate other people. This imitation could be derived from norms in the Xhosa communities. Burials are compared with one another in that the performance of the bereaved in reference to social requirements is weighed against the performance of others who have found themselves in similar situations, since one cannot plan or practise bereavement. It simply happens to any individual, becoming a yardstick in the requirement to perform. The future welfare of the bereaved and offspring are irrelevant in the context of the social performance of the burial. Comparisons are made, pitting one burial ceremony against another, leaving out the essential background or personal information. What is perceived by the community during the performance presentation becomes the deciding factor of cooperative behaviour that might lead to the reward of social acceptance or the punishment of non-conformity.

The subjection to cooperative behaviour required for Xhosa burials is seen as following traditions within these communities. Random House College Dictionary ((2010) defines ‘tradition’ as the handing down of statements, beliefs, legends, and customs from generation to generation especially by word or by practice. According to Boyd and Richerson (1982: 329), group conformity to tradition is determined by the frequency of different culturally transmitted behaviour. Ngubane (2004: 171) interprets dying according to African tradition as “going back home where you belong”; hence the Xhosa expression when announcing the death of a person is “*ugodukile uyekobawo abakhulu*”, meaning

that he/she has gone home or that he/she has joined his/her fore-fathers. Ngubane (2004: 172) further asserts that “when going home one needs respect, dignity and proper burial” and a person in “African belief does not die, but goes to the ancestors”.

Xhosa communities use rituals as an acknowledgement of public good. This is evident in the night vigils, prayers and memorial services where the community is fed and sometimes entertained lavishly. Boyd and Richerson (1982: 327) define ‘public good’ as good that, once produced by one member of the group, cannot be feasibly withheld from the others. In the case of Xhosa burial practice, these customs, which presumably engage for the public good of the community, may in some instances negatively influence the welfare of the bereaved which in turn, affects the economic survival of that person or family long after the burial event. This questions the value of the social structure that supposedly guarantees membership of the community, but does not acknowledge the financial struggle left behind after the extravagance involved in setting up a burial event.

Many of the products of the public good involved in Xhosa burials, such as the expense associated with the beverages and food served during burial night vigils are acquired through the “coercion” of the bereaved (Boyd and Richerson 1982: 326). Owing to a decline in the economic well-being of these modern Xhosa communities, the funeral donation known as “*unonceba*” that used to prevail is now compromised as people can hardly afford to maintain themselves on a day-to-day basis. Asante, Asmah and Adjei (2013: 106) note that the funeral donation that was common in everyday life is clearly no longer there; people have changed their habits (Goffman, 1959: 11).

In Xhosa culture, when the bereaved receives notification that one member of family has died the whole extended family comes together to assist in the preparation for the burial. This is the point where social performance is first invoked as the family leads the bereaved hierarchy, now called the chief

mourners, to be isolated from the preparation of burial. Here Goffman's idea of dramaturgy (1974) comes into play as the bereaved takes on the role that is expected of her/him regardless of her/his grief and how she/he might want to express it. By being bereaved one is required to behave in a certain manner in the role of chief mourner. This behaviour is dictated by Xhosa society and fails to accommodate the individual/personal grief and emotions of the bereaved, or their immediate needs.

According to an informant in this study, the process begins with the family emptying the '*indlu enkulu*', an equivalent of the main bedroom, as this is where the last respects will be paid. Van der Linde (2011) confirms this practice as he asserts that traditionally the family will empty the house and make space for all the family that will come from all over. Mbiti (1975) points out that the removal of clothes within the house of the deceased and the shaving of hair by the family clan is the indication that life continues to spring up. The informant further explained that, if it is the husband who is deceased, the bereaved wife sits behind the door, and, if it is a wife, the husband sits at the top of the room. These sitting positions denote the status of a husband and wife within the Xhosa communities. The man as the head of the family sits at the head of the body/coffin and the woman as the support sits at the feet of her husband's coffin or body. The first family members and/or neighbours to arrive arrange the main bedroom to accommodate this seating arrangement by placing a grass mat (*ukhukho*) on the floor. Nowadays a mattress is used. If the deceased died away from home, then a candle or lamp will replace the body until it arrives. In our day the coffin usually arrives on the day of the burial, but, in remote areas, it can be arranged to arrive the night before. During past times, the body would be present from death up until the burial, as most people died at home and the burial would happen the day after death. This role-playing for mourning rituals and performance in Xhosa communities is not restricted to one particular social class, gender, or age (Laneri, 2007: 167). The role-playing is consistent throughout Xhosa communities.

## 2.2 CONFORMITY AND SOCIO-CULTURAL TRANSMISSION

Boyd and Richerson (1982: 329) suggest that “conformity and transmission” in individuals are assumed to be disproportionately likely to imitate the more common behavioural types among their cultural parents. Goffman (1959) on the other hand, defines performances such as the Xhosa burial performance practice as crucial, and claims that it goes beyond time, place, and the situation of the bereaved. All that pertains to the bereaved person at that point becomes irrelevant regarding his personal accomplishment or lack of it. His personal emotional state cannot interfere with his performance in the role of chief mourner. The occurrence of death, which most of the time is not expected or prepared for, triggers a creatively staged performance ritual. This ranges from physical actions such as the bereaved family with their eyes cast down, avoiding direct gaze with other mourners as a sign of respect for the deceased. The following day after the burial, the bereaved woman goes to the river to wash all the blankets that were used before death, this is a cleansing ritual. On the day of burial, and before family members begin to disperse, the *ukuxukuxa* ritual which means cleansing the family members who nursed the deceased is performed, and a goat or sheep or even a fowl is sacrificed/slaughtered. There are many other activities that have to be performed as part of the mourning process, and these differ from family to family, clan to clan, for a number of reasons including how far the community has embraced modernity and mostly whether the activity is affordable or not.

According to Ngubane (2004: 171), most African people continue to alienate themselves from traditional performances in the name of civilisation, modern progress, and development. This act of non-adherence to traditional customs forces people to cooperate by doing things that they consider to be the ‘new’ norm in order to be accepted by their community. The non-adherence to traditional customs actually refers to the gap or missing transmission of the ideologies of old Xhosa burial practices. The missing information or non-information encourages people and communities in this modern time to adopt contemporary practices that do not have any particular affiliation to Xhosa

traditions. Furthermore, these new additions are as a result of the need to portray obsessive extravagance and lavishness during the burial ceremony.

The old African or Xhosa ideology of burial practice requires that people treat their culture as a great tool for the sustaining and strengthening of society. Contemporary Xhosa cultural practices in burial ceremonies have shifted from traditional practice to modern (Western) practice which results in any manner many forms of change and performance requirements. For example, there has been such a shift in cultural customs and rituals that most dimensions of a traditional Xhosa burial have been undermined by modern burial practices, thereby prejudicing indigenous culture. According to Asante, Asmah and Adjei (2013: 102), culture is the soul, spirit, and life of a society. Vaughan (2010: 1) defines culture as a set of values, beliefs, and social norms that a group of individuals share and that are transmitted across generations. It is not that change is unacceptable, but change that is not positive in its influence on individual members of a society could have long-term detrimental effects or impact on society as a whole. A bereaved person who has gone through the current culture of imposed performance requirements has two likely reactions which are either to advocate for reversion to the old customs that Xhosa culture intended, or insist that others that are bereaved go through the pressure that they faced as a chief mourner.

According to Boyd and Richerson (1982: 326), the value of group cooperation argues that “humans are not solely self-interested in making choices” as their choices are based on taking into consideration the interests of others. This implies, in the context of Xhosa burial practices, that choices made by individuals regarding the continuance of their indigenous cultural and traditional practices, or in the acceptance of modern change, are balanced against changes in the welfare of others. This means that Xhosa burial performance practice requirement becomes subject to the welfare needs dictated by the community at that time. This change has been accepted over time by Xhosa society as attested by Graburn (2001: 7) who claims that tradition becomes

synonymous with that which is being overtaken by science or modernity. This implies that Xhosa people and society as a whole are aware of the challenges of “altruism or selflessness” as part of a culture that has been transmitted through time.

For example, a bereaved person in modern Xhosa community is now left to deal with burial as a personal matter in an egoistic subjection by society, and he/she does not expect to receive economic support from the community to contribute towards the burial arrangements. Yet, according to old Xhosa culture, the whole community was expected to be involved in the burial arrangements and expenses in honouring the deceased. The reasons for this are, firstly, the socio-economic status of many people who can hardly afford to survive, and, secondly, the advent of burial insurances and societies to which everybody is now expected to subscribe in one way or another. It is assumed that everybody has to prepare for his/her burial by saving through insurance of some sort, and, if this is not done, his/her family has to take care of the burial costs in accordance with the accepted norm. These norms are, firstly, for the bereaved family to allow community members to come to the bereaved home for evening prayers and, after the prayer meetings, attendees have to be served with beverages and food. Of course there are donations that the attendees usually give called '*imali yekhandlela*' meaning 'the candle money'. These donations, although they are always welcome and appreciated, are, however, usually just enough to buy the candles which have to burn day and night from the day death is announced until the burial. The second norm is the burial itself which is expected to include a coffin/casket, a tent, flowers, programmes, and the feeding of community members who have attended the funeral. If these norms are not observed the bereaved family will be talked about as being either mean or poor. Whatever label is pasted on the bereaved does not go down well as it is associated with being different or not acceptable to the community.

Boyd and Richerson (1982: 326) describe the evolution of selflessness in humans as requiring special circumstances which result in educating or orientating society about the value of human cooperation (group cooperation). This notion has become twisted in contemporary Xhosa custom where serving and cooperating within the dictates of society is imperative to escape the punishment of being socially shunned.

Cultural transmission in the context of Xhosa traditional customs and rituals has been greatly influenced by the migration of Xhosa people to urban areas and other provinces of the country (South Africa) the researcher specify Xhosa because of his race and data collection of the research from Xhosa burials. Movement and transmission of cultures interfered to change of burial traditional. This uncontrolled extravagance of burial can be the sign of anger from Xhosa ancestors because of the wrong burial practice. The concept of cultural evolution, according to Boyd and Richerson, is explained as pro-social behaviour that can foster positive traits of community development in the context of education and job creation thereby improving the livelihood of the community. Xhosa modern communities may find themselves practising wrong rituals, like conducting lavish burial ceremonies which are influenced by the migration of Xhosa people to other provinces, especially urban areas. According to Ciaffa (2008), this migration should be seen in a favourable light in terms of the Xhosa community learning from other communities and not the reverse. Ngubane (2004: 171), in this regard, argues that most enlightened Africans will emphasise that culture is dynamic when they want to compromise their authentic self and African values.

The arguments advanced by Block (2001) and Dlukulu (2010) highlight the transition that has overwhelmed Xhosa communities in their cultural practice of burials. This is emphasised by Boyd and Richerson (1982: 337) when they refer to cultural group selection which socio-biologists articulate as being human behaviour that is egoistic (Boyd and Richerson, 1982: 325). However, based on the understanding that “group selection is not an important force of

evolution” Boyd and Richerson (1982: 325) are of the view that communities do not necessarily have to ascribe to all modern ideologies of cultural practice to ensure the survival of the community as a whole. Ciaffa (2008: 122) argues that genuine modernisation in Africa can be realised only through the revitalisation of African cultural norms.

The gaps in cultural education in understanding the complexity and nature of cultural practices pertaining to performance of burial as understood by Xhosa society need to be filled. These cultural practices include the collective respecting of the family in their grief, and respecting the will left by the deceased. For example, in the case of my father, he wished to be buried within two days after his death and in a homemade coffin. His will was not respected because the family wanted to conduct the burial in accordance with contemporary Xhosa burial practise that satisfies the requirements of the society at large. A good comparison can be found in Fontein’s claim that ‘the chief’ died in December 2004, and was buried the next day in secret with only a handful of the elders present. It can be assumed that this cultural burial practice was drawn from previous generations and but still formed part of contemporary practice (Boyd and Richerson, 1982). It can be seen from this example that some people are still following traditionally prescribed burial practices and are respecting the will of the deceased in observing proper traditional and ritual guidelines for burial.

According to Ngubane (2004: 175), tensions between tradition and change always exist and often lead to the compromising of practices followed in death rituals. Friesen (1990) remarks that maintaining African rituals require adjustments that may present change in part of traditional practices and performance during burial. The bereaved in his/her personal state of grief is unable to argue with society with regard to the dictates of dealing with the performance requirements even if they negatively affect the bereaved person. According to Ngubane (2004: 171), even the most enlightened Africans will always emphasise the fact that culture is dynamic when they want to

compromise their African values. Boyd and Richerson (1982: 328), on the other hand, claim that in order to understand the equilibrium distribution of culturally acquired behaviours representative of a population, forces that influence change must be taken into consideration in the dissemination of those cultural behaviours over a period of time.

Today, families keep the deceased for two to three weeks in the mortuary for the purpose of accommodating preparations and extended announcements that have to be communicated regarding burial arrangements. Other issues taken into account during burial arrangements include going through the will of the deceased. In most cases this is overruled to accommodate the needs of fulfilling the wishes of the community during the burial. African people are very superstitious by nature, and it is usually believed that burying a family member against his or her will can be detrimental for the family with regards to traditional belief systems in which people believe that not following the wish of the deceased may result in his/her spirit coming back to haunt them and cause trouble for the family (Mbiti 1975: 4). Clearly this superstition is slowly being watered down.

According to Ranger (2004: 114), those who carry out the burial have to be purified with herbs followed by the digging tools cleansing ritual. In our day there is a popular ritual called “after tears” (Setsiba, 2012: 121) which denigrates the traditional belief of mourning of a loved one by showing remorse especially during the early days after death including days after the burial. “After tears” is a contemporary term literary translated as “tears of mourning” and refers to a party which usually takes place on the evening after the burial where mostly friends gather at a place in memory of their deceased friend and celebrate with food and alcohol. In many townships and urban areas, ‘after tears’ has become a contemporary tradition, with people meeting to drink and braai meat. Traditionally, usually a week or so after the burial a ritual called cleansing of the spades and pots takes place. These are the utensils which are used for digging the grave and cooking. The ritual is performed to show

appreciation to the men and women who helped the family with funeral arrangements, and is conducted in a peaceful manner. The contemporary 'after tears', on the other hand, is different from the traditional cleansing ritual as its purpose is not to thank the helpers but to celebrate the life of the deceased, and thus death becomes the reason for a joyous celebration. The manner in which the "after tears" ritual is being practiced is similar to what Ngubane (2004: 175) refers to as the "tensions between tradition" and the modern way of life where traditional acts are misinterpreted, and since this happens in a public domain the modern way becomes the norm.

### **2.3 OBSESSION AND THE RITUAL OF SOCIAL PERFORMANCE**

The Oxford Dictionary (1988) defines obsession as "a persistent idea or thought dominating a person's mind". The Encarta World English Dictionary (Microsoft, 2009) defines obsession as a display of persistent preoccupation with an idea, or feeling. In this sense, obsession is a feeling or idea which may result in negative influence, which is very obvious in the behaviour of some modern Xhosa people as everyone wants to practise what is accepted as the standard in order to "keep up with the Joneses". Thus, some people find themselves doing what they consider to be prestigious actions to avoid being ostracised by the community, everyone else then follows suit until the whole community adopts the practice as the norm, and finally it becomes an obsession.

Milton (2011: 1-2) commented that "Xhosa funerals in South Africa are lavish, extravagant and generous affairs that leave a bereaved family in financial debt as well as suffering from emotional strain" and Miti (2010: 8) questions the funerals by asking "are fancy funerals the answer?" The obsession to conform to the trends of society often results in people finding themselves doing all they can to be approved of even to their own detriment. This irresponsible altruistic human behaviour is also observed during a number of burial events among the modern Xhosas of the Eastern Cape region where the bereaved family has to perform to the dictates of the class with whom he/she associates. In this study

I refer to this type of altruism as negative altruistic behaviour because it does not come naturally but is enforced by the fear of being different.

Today, burials in Xhosa communities often become appraisal events where people concentrate primarily on the organisation of the funeral. The burial is then evaluated in terms of being beautiful or unattractive. Comments, based on people's views, are usually made when evaluating the organisation of the funeral. These statements can go as far as being extremely cynical, comparing a glamorous funeral with how the deceased was valued when she or he was alive. These cynical remarks include statements such as, for example, "*Yho! Ungasemhle umchwabo ka mama wakhe kodwa zangebamhoye esadla'mazimba*" (their mother's funeral was so beautiful, but they never seemed to care for her when she was alive). Whether these comments are true or not, they are always at the back of the bereaved family's minds as the fear of being different is something that comes naturally to people who are status conscious.

In African culture, for example, mourners do not require an invitation to attend a funeral and everyone who can and wants to come simply arrives without announcement. This means that the bereaved family has to cater for an unknown number of mourners and hope that whatever is cooked will be enough for everyone. If people go hungry they will be critical, and may not want to attend another bereavement in that family. Traditionally this was also the case, although the catering was simple and inexpensive when compared with modern funerals. Mourners were fed with '*inkobe*', boiled dried corn and water, and the corn was taken from the family food reserves as well as donated by family members and neighbours (Fig 2.1). Today it would be taboo to feed mourners with '*inkobe*' and, as a result of shame, funeral catering has become a lucrative business for the industry during burial events.



**Figure 2.1: Siphe Potelwa, *Inkobe*, photograph, 2011**

Catering will often be elaborate with fancy table decor, laid out with crockery, cutlery, table cloths, and overlays with matching chair ties, etc. as seen in Fig 2.1. In this situation, the bereaved family has to put on a good show to make sure that everybody has eaten well and has been taken good care of. This is the bereaved family 'showing off'. There are also the seating arrangements where mourners are grouped according to class. This comprises the main table for the presiding minister or priest and his/her entourage, one for other dignitaries which will include important guests, usually colleagues and close friends of the chief mourner and the immediate family many of whom have travelled from afar. Sometimes, depending on availability of a big space – usually a hall – the serving of food is done in a seating arrangement reminiscent of a wedding ceremony where everyone sits at a table and is served with a two or three course meal. If the hall is not big enough, a tent would be installed outside for everyone else. All this catering is expensive but has to be done so that the bereaved family can fit in with the so-called accepted norms of modern burial arrangements.

I believe that the obsession involved in burial is not only due to the bereaved's need to satisfy society, but also because society itself has an appetite for lavishness for its own entertainment and appeasement. Nowadays, funerals are fashionable displays with modern people obsessed with what they should wear, to the extent that they buy special attire and outfits for the funeral. The desire to dress smartly is becoming more obsessive as mourners sometimes go out of their way to look fashionably good. Burials are now social meeting events. The dress code also includes hairstyles and/or expensive hats. Materialism is apparent in all its ramifications including the choice of expensive caskets and funeral cars that all go towards the presentation of the deceased as being worthy and well-honoured. How expensive icons have taken the place of respect and dignity is obscure to say the least.

The bereaved family is expected to perform or show off to their friends who have attended the funeral, supposedly as a support system. At the back of their minds, however, the bereaved family is aware that some friends come to see whether the funeral will be conducted according to the status of the deceased or the aspirations of the audience. Thus the bereaved person has to make certain that she/he performs in accordance with this standard. Some families hire a catering company during burial with the view to relieving the *oomakoti* (sister-in-laws) from cooking, so they may be present at the burial and mourn with the family. Employing catering companies is fast becoming normal practice at most funerals I attended during the development of this research.

The number of people taking out funeral insurance or funeral plans has increased over the years since the colonial era. Mbili (1999: 12), a director of a South African Life Insurance Company, claims that black people are the biggest buyers of funeral plans and insurances. Mbili also states that people are not well informed about the different types of funeral cover, such as the hybrid burial society and commercial burial society. Hybrid burial societies are usually funeral parlours who sign people up to financial monthly contributions,

payable voluntarily in advance, towards inevitable funeral costs. Commercial burial societies, on the other hand, are usually with more well-established organisations, such as Old Mutual, Liberty Life, Assupol, etc., who are big commercial insurance companies.

During burial ceremonies, the chief mourner is often not consulted on decision-making but is usually coerced by relatives into making sure that the funeral traditions, religion, and cultural rituals are observed. Pastor Dube (2001) asserts that bereaved families often do not make decisions on the day of funeral; they are coerced into them by relatives and neighbours.

The need to bury a person, either known or unknown triggers human emotions, and even more so when the deceased is a loved one and would not be seen again. In Xhosa communities, the bereaved are expected to perform a number of rituals, including various types of cleansing as mentioned earlier. Even though these ritual performances assist the bereaved in expressing and exposing the pain to a certain extent, solitary space is still always necessary. Rituals among Africans in general and among Xhosa people in particular are a form of expression. Hauser (1963) argues that ritual as well as “arts as cultural forms constitute an expression of dominant class interests in society. In the Xhosa community rituals are usually associated with calling of supernatural powers which are, in this case, the ancestors. This is because Xhosa people in particular and Africans in general believe that the departed have the power to protect, hence the ancestors are constantly made part of every family event. In Xhosa culture death is not perceived as a final state of being, instead the deceased’s spirit is elevated to the realms of beyond where it takes on the status of ancestor to watch over the living whilst remaining invisible. The adherence to ritual and how they are performed differ from family to family.

I believe that the old traditional Xhosa burial practice encouraged people to bury their loved ones in a solemn manner as the bereaved were given more private moments to mourn. This is because funerals were conducted

immediately after death and families were allowed to continue to come and mourn after burial through a ritual called “*ukubeka ilitye*”. In this ritual, mourners who arrived after the burial would be taken to the grave to pay their last respects and sprinkle a small amount of soil on the grave. This is the opportunity to say whatever they wish to say, either silently or audibly, in the same way as a priest or minister when uttering the phrase ‘ashes to ashes’ (*uthuthu eluthuthwini*). In some cases, the rushed burial, called “*ukuqutyelwa*”, would be conducted by community members and the funeral rituals would follow later after everyone else arrived. This was done as there were no mortuaries in which to keep the deceased’s body, thus requiring immediate burial.

It would appear that traditional Xhosa burial practices are being neglected at an alarming rate as the community gradually embrace new trends and modernity brought about by Western-influenced civilisation. Breyley (2007: 95) concurs with this neglect of traditional culture claiming that burial practices no longer represent traditional African cultures. With the influx of settlers to the African continent, many new ‘ideas’ were introduced to the black population, the most significant being Christianity. The people among whom Christianity has spread have had to cast away their indigenous clothing, their customs, and their beliefs which were all described as “pagan and barbaric” (Stubbs, 1978: 60). Christianity which comes with its own ethos which undermines the traditional African customs as pointed out by Stubbs (1978: 60). The Christian ethos comes with a form of mental oppression which makes it difficult for the modern Xhosa people to go back to their traditional cultural practice. Attempts to change this way of thinking by chiefs and churches, discouraging people from overspending when conducting burial ceremonies, have yielded very slow results and burial practices continue to be marked by great extravagance. This does not in any way reflect the usual modesty and humbleness found in traditional Xhosa practice.

People have always been “altruistic” (Boyd and Richerson, 1982: 326) and only require special positions of power, such as during the social performance of burial, so as to act out selflessness. This would be fine if it were not a socially charged event that is almost always galvanised by peer pressure. Modern Xhosa community members nurse the fear of being judged and being embarrassed when they perform burial ceremonies outside the accepted norm. An example of this display of ego can be seen in the behaviour of a Xhosa relative (aunt) who demanded that her tombstone be erected before her death. This could be interpreted as evidence of the fear of being judged by the community after she died and the effect on the prospective bereaved people in that situation. This is another type of obsession, as one wants to make sure that even after one’s death the dictates of the social class one is associated with are observed accordingly. Keeping up appearances has become a keynote of the bereaved family’s status during burial rituals. This is spurred on by the insatiable expectations of mourners and community. The image one portrays at the helm of an ostentatious Xhosa burial is one which satisfies mourners, on-lookers, distant family and the bereaved. Sufficient catering, attractive decor, an expensive casket, fashionable clothes and shiny cars all add up to a successful burial. The question is ... successful for whom? Social evolution, which includes modernisation, globalisation, urbanisation, affects the mutation of cultures, but in the case of the Xhosa burial this mutation is not entirely responsible for the way society imbibes and interprets new ideologies.

## **2.4 FACADE OF ALTRUISM IN THE SOCIAL PERFORMANCE OF XHOSA BURIALS**

Altruism may be described as a form of selflessness that is exhibited by a person or group of people in which the focus and intent of whatever action is referred to as the welfare of others. As such it takes on noble characteristics in view of social relations which would imply a positive appearance for it in the performance practice of the modern Xhosa burial practice. Altruism may also be seen as a contrast to the concept of egoism which is based on activity where benefit accrues to the individual whereas the characteristic quality of altruism is that individuals are morally compelled to seek the benefit of others instead of themselves. In the case of modern Xhosa burial practice, the requirement to benefit others instead of oneself is based on the egoistic nature of either the individual who is the bereaved or the beneficiaries who are the community at large. The strength of social impetus allows society to deem itself as the beneficiary, and to classify what is worth acknowledging for its welfare. Either way ego finds a place through social relations and the need for social survival or acceptance. Altruistic actions, as much as they may be voluntary, are largely a result of manipulation and coercion by, for example, the social community who will benefit from what is offered by the bereaved.

There are continuous debates as to whether “a pure form of altruism is even possible as the idea of egoism suggests that no act of sharing, helping, or sacrificing can be described as truly altruistic if the individual may receive an intrinsic reward” in the form of personal gratification (Gintis *et al.*, 2003: 157). It is very important to note that both egoism and altruism in the Xhosa context are based on the set norms of the community in the burial practice. Thus the acts of altruism are most often forced by peer pressure from the beneficiaries who are the community itself. Everybody stands to gain from the selfless acts of the bereaved fulfilling the need to spend lavishly on all manner of items and services from different vendors then giving it all to the community with no thought for self, except that vital acceptance, which can be perceived as a form of benefit or personal gratification.

Rushton, Chrisjohn and Fekken state that:

A certain individual may behave altruistically in one case and egoistically in another situation. However, some individuals tend to behave more altruistically, while others tend to behave more egoistically. Altruism may be considered a general attitude to the point where altruism has been considered as a trait (1981: 293-302).

In the case of the Xhosa burial performance the individual assumes both characteristic qualities of egoism and altruism. These traits are triggered by the act of bereavement where the person has to deal with his or her own personal feelings, as well as the correct honouring of the deceased, and the requirements needed in assuming the role of chief mourner. This enforces altruistic behaviour as one has to perform for everyone else's benefit. This type of performance by the bereaved includes feeding the visitors in style, attending to *their* every need, and showing to what heights he/she will go to honour the departed.

The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Okasha, 2012) indicates that kin selection in animals and humans results in more altruistic behaviour of an individual towards close kin rather than kin and non-kin. What is unique about Xhosa burials however, is that the bereaved is not allowed to exercise altruism through kin selection since the community indeed make up his/her kin. Instead the altruism involved is dictated to him/her in fulfilment of a role in social performance. It in fact looks like 'contrived altruism' which leans more towards the ego, in that it is an act of self-preservation.

In Barclay's research into altruistic behaviour, entitled "The Evolution of Charitable Behaviour and the Power of Reputation", the author asserts that people are inclined to subject themselves to the negative experiences of their friends and family socially. This means that the individual may go as far as sacrificing him or herself for the benefit of the group which may inspire others in that social group to do the same and that way encouraging cooperative

behaviour in altruism (Barclay, 2011). This may be true of any individual within the Xhosa community, but, in reference to the burial practice, it seems more like being singled out as a scapegoat to satisfy the desires of the community. The individual does not predict a burial practice, nor has time to practise for it, but must immediately comply with dictated social standards that offer little, if any, empathy or support, but assure a systematic social bullying if things are not up to scratch.

Axelrod and Hamilton (1981) state that it can be beneficial to one's self to help others, if there is a chance that those on helps can and will reciprocate the help. This is no longer practised in Xhosa burial practice, and especially around the issue of financing and funding an expensive burial ceremony. Assistance is neither offered nor reciprocated by the community. It is also not the case that individuals cooperate because others cooperate in return, (Barclay, 2011) as cooperation in altruistic behaviour is not determined by the reciprocation of others. Thus, the altruistic behaviour of the bereaved in Xhosa burial practices is not determined by the reciprocation of others but is more about maintaining or elevating social status.

## **CHAPTER TREE: ARTISTIC INFLUENCES AND METHODOLOGY**

The following artists have been chosen for their unique ways of critiquing various social issues ranging from religion to gender, sexuality, and heritage. Dutch born Stefan Belderbos masquerades as religious rituals, taunting audience with his own brand of iconic imagery. The South African artist Steven Cohen promulgates gay identity through masquerading in public performances attracting the attention of ordinary people. He uses costume, make-up and incongruous locations to get a reaction from his audience, many of whom are shocked, amused or uncertain. Credo Mutwa, on the other hand, focuses on African culture, continually making statements about its rapidly changing face, insisting we do not turn our backs on African cultural ideologies. The Congolese artist Sammy Baloji's manipulation of photography comments on the industrial and cultural heritage of his home region in Katanga. All these artists have in some way or another been an influence in the artistic development of my solo exhibition which forms part of this research.

### **3.1 MASQUERADING LIFE**

I am specifically drawn to the works of the Dutch artist Stefan Belderbos (2010) who focuses on religious rituals of the liturgy using masquerade to play them out. Belderbos' work is synonymous with the issues I raise in my own work. Although his work is centred in Christianity, similarities are evident in the way he mixes old and new cultural beliefs in execution of the final rites for death. He seeks inspiration in art history, religion, tradition, and literature. In my own work I look to present social influences which affect and to some extent, upset, old traditions. His dissertation, entitled "*From art to religious ritual; a study of the integration of performance art in liturgy*" was the first in visual art undertaken at PhD level at Leiden University, and he has since 1993 been making installations and performances. My own centre of creative productivity revolves around the idea of installations and performances, employing different media such as sculpture and photography to add elements of layering and multiplicity.

Masquerade originated in West Africa (Turner, 2015: 1), and can refer to a performance by a masked character who acts out the persona of someone else. The African style of masquerade is an outdoor event, performed by men, and sometimes limited to the attendance of men (Turner, 2015: 1). Masquerading is a medium that relates to my work due to the social performance showcased by modern black South Africans during burials, in the way they dress, preach and behave. In my own work, the female character is accepted by the mourners and well-wishers alike, she is surrounded by the community, doing what she must, masquerading to the dance of social demands, often with staged remorse.

In his artwork entitled "Crucifiction", Belderbos asks for feedback from the public to ascertain whether it has been portrayed in a positive or negative light. Belderbos's objective was to use performance to reinforce liturgical rituals and to discover how the rituals were experienced. He employs artistic freedom at times to contradict liturgical rituals. I am particularly inspired by his involvement with society, his understanding of beliefs, norms, and values, and how feedback becomes an integral part of his work. An artist seeking feedback from the community opens up a way for dialogue and exchange. I apply similar practice in some of my work, reflecting the juxtaposition between human cooperation and altruistic behaviour, resulting in symbolic performance art.

The identification of players in the ritual process as depicted by Belderbos is reflected in my work where the chief mourner is not a given persona, but rather allows for any individual to identify him/herself in this social role through the art of masquerade. Masquerade disguises the absence of the bereaved, presenting an actuality of the chief mourner who seems devoid of any emotional reaction. Masquerading as the chief mourner is a reaction to the imposed character required by social norms for the bereaved in modern Xhosa society. In addition, the masquerade is a representation of how society subverts the character of a person who is experiencing loss, and swaps it for a

socially accepted image. Performativity in the character of the chief mourner is developed through my interest in the theatricality of Belderbos' work. In 'Crucifiction', the single figure is in performance, outstretched arm, head tilted back, static but moving, the shock factor clearly evident. In my work, the chief mourner is a parody of the real thing, pretending to be pretending, and this could have shock value too (Fig 3.1). I also want viewers to feel a little uncomfortable.



**Figure 3.1: Stefan Belderbos, *Crucifiction*, performance art 2001**

Belderbos employs the motions by the ministers in these religious rituals of reading out liturgy in Churches, converting belief or tradition into action, these actions make up the performative process. The actions are accompanied by the symbol in the image of the crucified Christ. This is emblematic as much as it galvanises emotive reactions to the beliefs that are imbued in the image in Belderbos' costume. This is much like the ideas within my own performance. The actions of the actual chief mourners are incorporated into the performance to evoke emotive reactions from the audience. These reactions vary as I discovered in my field work where people react to the presence and actions of the chief mourner with emotions ranging from an acceptance of the social

tradition, to disdain in the knowledge of the experience of the bereaved. The symbolic colour of the clergy 'Black' that is used in Belderbos' work is also incorporated in my own work in embracing the reverence of the situation of funeral rites in the more contemporary socially accepted colour of mourning adopted from the Victorian era of mourning. In Belderbos' performance and mine the image portrayed by the costume is both the subject and object with the intent to highlight issues related to traditions and belief systems in their effect on individuals and how they influence actions and reactions within the community.

### **3.2 SOCIAL CONFRONTATION**

The employment of direct confrontation in the performance work of South African artist Steven Cohen, I find stimulating and fascinating. Cohen focuses on his identity as a gay man, drawing the attention of society through masquerade. He strives to drive home the issues he is confronting through radical performance art. Cohen starts his performance art by identifying himself as a 'gay' (homosexual) individual. He claims that his work is a digital painting of social reality. He presents an interpretation of the image of manifestations of humanity in the social environment with particular reference to his inferences related to issues of homosexual rights and experiences. The practical production in my study also references issues in the social environment with particular reference to Xhosa funeral rites and its effects on individuals within the community. In his work 'Chandelier' in 2001 Cohen, dressed in high-heels and interacted with the residents of a squatter camp community in Newtown, Johannesburg. According to Cohen he lives the art and intervenes in public, and his work is the performance of the place. He states that:

When I appear (visual art) as a beautiful construction and living artwork, the performance of the place and the performance of the people there are what may be called performance art – I am living art (Cohen n.d.).

His work 'Chandelier' raised controversy because the performance was placed in the backdrop of the daily experience of a black community whose squatter camp in Newton Johannesburg was in the process of being demolished (Fig. 3.2). His choice of highlighting the travails of individuals within a community speaks to my own work that highlights the experience of the bereaved in the Xhosa funeral situation despite the focus on the cultural stipulations for funeral processes. The difference in our works is that the focus of the chandelier in his work which is very different from the backdrop in which the work is placed while the focus of the funeral rites in my own work is part and parcel of the life and experiences of the individuals within the Xhosa community.

In the 'Chief Mourner' series I too take on the character of the main attraction, wearing costumes relevant to the performance. This tool is important in my work. I appear as a widow representing both modern and traditional society's expectation of a widow. This is portrayed through different outfits, such as the sophisticated woman in high-heels, in a beautiful black dress, fashionable hat, veil and gloves, in contrast to the rural woman in a simple black dress with a pinafore/apron, a shawl/scarf, and a turban. The disparity in dress codes of these women represents the different societal expectations they adhere to. The apron of the rural woman is associated with domestic chores. On its own it denotes inequality and social class difference. During my performance, where I had to dress in these different dress codes I could relate to these inequalities. It was easier to find the simple dress worn by the traditional widow than was the case with the modern woman's dress, not to mention the discomfort of walking in high-heels.

Cohen values his homosexuality and expresses his feeling in his art performance. In my work, I can relate to the confrontational and challenging style of his performance. I also see a relationship between the state of interdependence and the social environment, much as Cohen does, and he attributes the success of his performance to the input of the social environment, making it dependent on other people. In this regard, he amalgamates two art

forms, namely performance art and painting. According to Cohen (2001), he was unsure of how hectic it would be wearing high-heels and what an incongruous place it was to be half-naked.

The relevance of Cohen's work is echoed in my exposure, through masquerade, of mourning in Xhosa communities. For example, in the 'Chief Mourner' series I do not hide the fact that I am a man dressed in the female clothes associated with a grieving wife. Cohen's use of performance to address intolerance towards his sexual inclination also relates to intolerance seen in the modern Xhosa people's reaction to any contradiction of their social values as being a possible affliction of demons.



**Figure 3.2: Steven Cohen, *Chandelier*, 2001, performance art**

Source: Stevenson 2015.

### **3.3 SCULPTURAL METAPHORS**

In addressing cultural issues in my artwork, I turn to sculpture inspired by the South African artist Vusamazulu Credo Mutwa who focuses on the preservation of African culture which, he argues, is rapidly changing. He expresses his feeling through drawing and therapeutic sculpture (Figs 3.3-3.6). Mutwa had no formal training in art. All of his artworks are an outflow of his personal mission and vision to bring the almost forgotten tales, myths, and knowledge of traditional African Spirituality to a wider audience, and to preserve it before it is

completely lost (NLA Design and Visual Arts, 2013). This of which is an influence as Mutwa is anchored in cultural philosophy which cradles the beginnings and formation of accepted traditions within a society

According to Credo, most African traditional knowledge was passed on orally from the mouth of the teacher to the ear of the student, and emphasis was placed on memorising these stories in exact detail. Mutwa's ideologies that surround his art are highly controversial in South African circles. His ideologies have been compared to the poet and artist William Blake (1861-1862) of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, who was considered mad by his contemporaries for his idiosyncratic views but has been held in high regard by later critics for his expressiveness and creativity and also for the philosophical and mystical undercurrents within his work. Blake, much like Mutwa, adapted pagan and Christian mythical motifs to create his own innovative, idiosyncratic, and creative religious mythology. Mutwa has done the same with African traditional motifs, Western religious and mythical symbolism, and, in so doing, redefines indigenous African religion (NLA Design and Visual Arts 2013). In my own work I enact the traditional customs of the Xhosa funeral rites within the creative process to address the events that happen around it. I pit the traditional symbolisms of the original actions against the contemporary customs and question the value of these with the funeral rite process.



**Figure 3.3: Credo Mutwa, I am a sculptor, Photograph date unknown**  
Source: NLA Design and Visual Arts 2013



**Figure 0.4: Credo Mutwa, Cultural Village in Soweto, date unknown**  
Source: NLA Design and Visual Arts 2013



**Figure 3.5: Credo Mutwa, *Africa Moon Goddess*, Cement, date unknown**

Source: NLA Design and Visual Arts 2013

In my own work, I use sculpture to express the effects of obsession pervading and entrenched in Xhosa burial customs. I show this by repetition, layering, and the multiplicity of different symbols, such as multiple coffins and caskets which become recurrent symbols in my installation works. The small coffins and caskets are arranged in a large heap, confronting the viewer, asking for a minute to reflect on how social phenomenon has changed our people's perception of death.

I also find it fascinating to see how Mutwa as an artist, who is also a *sangoma* or *shaman*, dresses himself with both a sculpture of a human skull which may be symbolic of death or mortality of indigenous knowledge as well as spectacles or sun glasses which may be interpreted as representing the embracing of aspects of modernism or Western influence. In his own words, Mutwa remarks, "I am not seeking anybody's sympathy when I am telling you this; I just want you all to know who and what Credo Mutwa is" (Mutwa, 2013: 4). This saying is addressed in the focus of my work in which I use coffins and caskets in the form of playthings and in abundance while depicting a sorrowful

moment which is usually taken very seriously in the African culture. At the same time, the huge heap of these miniature coffins and caskets is meant to confront the viewers and cause them to reflect or question their symbolic meaning whilst at the same time admiring the appealing technical execution they possess. In one of my works I also make use of sunglasses as a symbol of blindfolding the wearers, expressing their persistent obsession caused by the cooperative behaviour with regards to the extravagance associated with modern funeral practices. In my study, I relate to Mutwa in the way he carries on with his ideologies despite and regardless of external impressions. In one of his works, entitled “A dark wind”, Mutwa infers that people got the Aids virus sweeping through the land by a dark wind that pushes it (Mutwa, 2010: 01). In my own work, I present the social cooperative behaviour as a dark cloud that overshadows modern African society and leads it to conform to practices which may be detrimental to its development and its roots.



**Figure 3.6: Credo Mutwa, *Earth Mother*, Cement, date unknown**

Source: NLA Design and Visual Arts 2013

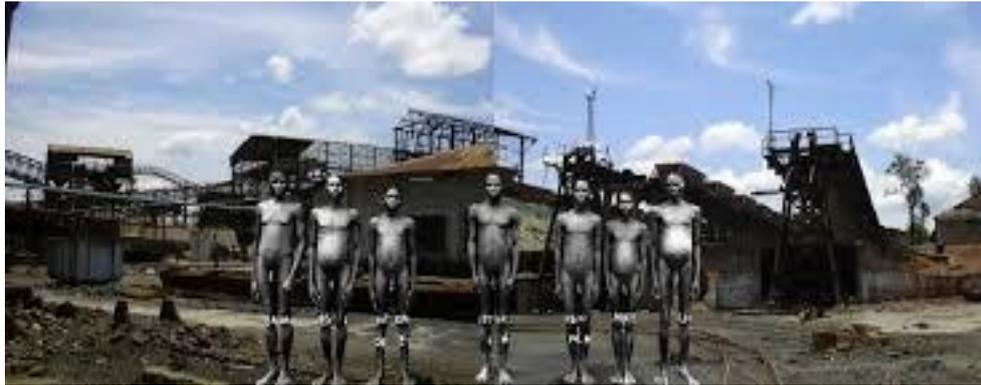
I am inspired by Mutwa's passion for speaking out about modern (Western) influences and, at the same time, using sculpture, painting and writing to exert himself positively in his artwork. Mutwa is relevant to the argument of my study because of the cultural transmission of his ideologies through his art. I would hope to provide different insights to modern Xhosa people regarding traditional burial practice, now slowly becoming a thing of the past. Mutwa appears to be angry with foreign religions that enslaved the minds of African people and restricted their vision. He also seems to be angry with the education system, and insinuates that this is the reason that black people were robbed of their 'true worth and the truth about themselves'. This is referenced in my work through the use of sunglasses which are a symbolic dilution and reordering of Xhosa burial customs. Mutwa (2010) talks of the education system as the best tool to improve society, but, at the same time, argues that it has robbed African people of their worth. While Mutwa makes use of exaggeration through the size of his sculptural figures I use both exaggeration and multiplicity/repetition of similar objects to express the obsessive behavioural practices of my community.

### **3.4 IMAGE RECONSTRUCTION**

The work of Congolese artist Sammy Baloji, who focuses on the industrial and cultural heritage of his home region of Katanga, is also of relevance to my practical work through his use of photography and digital collage techniques. In his artwork, Baloji superimposes archival images from the past on contemporary photographs to produce eerily questioning images. He imprints old archival colonial images on contemporary settings and landscapes. His works are an interrogation of the post-colonial present of his Congolese society. I find the technique of photographic collage that Baloji uses influential in how he takes images from archives and documentary and puts them together to create new discourse on serious issues that have plagued the society for decades on end.

I reconstruct the Xhosa burial situation based on information collected from traditional informants and personal observation to illustrate how traditional funerals were carried out. Baloji uses photography as a medium to interrogate current political concerns with reference to the past, and he also explores cultural and architectural 'traces' of his Congolese dark past, specifically in Lubumbashi of the South Eastern Katanga province. In my work I integrate images from the field work documentary of actual situations with images that are staged to emphasise the character of the bereaved and that of the chief mourner in generating new discussion on the issues involved.

Baloji uses Adobe Photoshop to multilayer his investigations on the notions of African utopias, post-colonial disillusionment, and a quest for authenticity. He works in the midst of the effects of colonisation, through exploitation of the Congo's natural resources, and the traumas and horrors of state-controlled violence and continuing human rights abuses. In my own work, the character of the chief mourner is superimposed on photographs of various funerals I attended, in a similar manner as Baloji manipulates his photographs. These photographs have been edited using Adobe Photoshop whereby I cut out the face or the body of chief mourner and replaced it with my own. Sunglasses are placed on other mourners, not only to disguise their identity but also to shield them from the impact of Western ideology. In 2005, Baloji presented 'Views of Likasi' a photo mixture that merged the mining town's colonial architecture with the evidence of the present (Figs 3.7-3.8). As a ceramacist and photographer, I am inspired by the photographs of Baloji in the way in which he merges and combines photographs through the use of computer software.



**Figure 3.7: Sammy-Baloji, a scene from *Mémoire (1)* photo mixture, 2006**

I am fascinated by his photocollage and the way he controls archived images by scanning and applying Adobe Photoshop to his photographs. The unfinished burning of his photograph gives the images a unique colour hue. In my work, I reconstruct the traditional burial situation from retrieved information, replacing the central figure with images of myself in the locale of a modern burial scene.



**Figure 3.8: Sammy Baloji, a scene from *Mémoire (2)*, photomixture, 2006**

Source: The Telegraph 2015

In the photographic series, 'Memory', Baloji shows the physical hard work of the African, the pride of their culture, and the role of their creativeness. I grew up in the rural areas of the Eastern Cape which has exposed me to the use of mud and clay to create bricks and sculptures. This is relevant to my own objectives in which I seek to provide economic solutions for people, enabling them to live within their means. People can, for example, go back to the

traditional way of burial by cutting unnecessary expenses such as the hearse, lavish catering, expensive caskets, etc.

The mood in the constructed images of Baloji's work and mine are different so to speak. Baloji has an eerie quality about his work that does not present itself as satire. Instead the images present a foreboding of the thought of questioning or investigating the presented image. They take on a surreal quality that collides different times in history to one another that are directly related in the state and happenings of the different elements of the constructed image. My own work however takes on a satiric quality in its juxtaposition of elements and placement of the order of these elements. In some pieces it goes as far as being comical in its social commentary on these very serious issues that plague those involved in funeral processes.

### **3.5 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The section explains how the data which informed this study was collected using the qualitative approach. According to Asante and Asmal (2013: 102), qualitative study endeavours to give a rich description of the people, artefacts, ceremonies, conversations, and places. Qualitative research also involves the use of a variety of materials, case studies, personal experience, interviews, observation, and visual texts that describe experience and meaning in the lives of individuals (Setsiba, 2012: 51). Qualitative methods, such as observation and interviews, were used in this study to achieve its goals as alluded to by Setsiba (2012).

This study recognises the almost impossible task of "decolonising the mind" in which vernacular language plays a major role (Ngugi, 1986). Ngugi (1986: 87) argues that "what immediately underlies the politics of language in African literature is the search for a liberating perspective within which to see ourselves clearly in relationship to ourselves", and he calls this, a "quest for relevance". This study's objective was, thus, to use indigenous Xhosa cultural knowledge to re-negotiate current burial practice, towards liberating the modern generation

from irrelevant societal cooperative behaviours. This knowledge was accessed through interviewing key informants as well as personal observation. Burgess (1989 cited in Marshall, 1996: 92), lists the characteristics of an "ideal" key informant as follows:

**Role in community:** Their formal role should expose them to the kind of information being sought by the researcher.

**Knowledge:** In addition to having access to the information desired, the informant should have absorbed the information meaningfully.

**Willingness:** The informant should be willing to communicate his/her knowledge to the interviewer and to cooperate as fully as possible.

**Communicability:** They should be able to communicate their knowledge in a manner that is intelligible to the interviewer.

**Impartiality:** Key informants should be objective and unbiased.

The informants in this study were selected mainly for their maturity and their vast cultural knowledge of relevant cultural practice. Some of them were directly involved in performing tasks and rituals associated with Xhosa traditional burial practices. Since these informants speak the same language as the researcher, communication and understanding of terms was comprehensible. All the informants were keen to give information as they related to and recognised the concerns being raised herein. The key informant method was, thus, deemed to be very valuable in unearthing the knowledge relevant to this study.

This study finds impetus in the paradox between so-called 'progress' and the negative altruistic behaviour emanating from the duress of cultural cooperation within some modern Xhosa people of the Eastern Cape. The focus of the researcher was to learn and share experiences, firstly through the burying of my own parents in accordance with accepted standards, as well as from observations of modern Xhosa burial practices over a period of time, both before and during this study's development. The second method which played a major role was various types of observation, varying from non-participation to

full participation observation. Douglas (1976: 5) observes that, in everyday life, people use various ways of arriving at truth or meaning, and the most important of these is by direct experience involving the use of basic senses. Hence, a non-participant observer is an “observer who has no involvement with the people or activities studied”.

On the other hand, “participant observation is a method of collecting data in which the researcher, to some degree, takes on the role of a member of the group being observed and participates in the functioning of that group” (Selltiz *et al.*, 1965: 207). In this study, I applied both these levels of participation, from being a participant observer during the funerals of both my parents, then being a non-participant observer at other burials thereafter. During both my parent’s burials I was fully involved in the whole process, which naturally included the intangible experience associated with the loss of loved ones, and it was this involvement that ignited an interest in my chosen field. I attended a number of funerals during the course of this study, with the aim of being an observer, not affected by the death itself. I felt that this experience would give me a more objective approach to the subject. I was in fact a voyeur with no emotional attachment. I therefore believe that my involvement as both non-participant and participant observer has added valuable insight to the subject of this research. The third method I used was informal conversations with colleagues and friends regarding their opinions on modern burial practice, and, in particular, the costs thereof. The visual narratives resulting from this study are, thus, informed by information gathered by means of the aforementioned qualitative research methods.

## **CHAPTER FOUR: ANALYSIS OF THE VISUAL NARRATIVES**

This chapter is an analysis and interpretation of the visual narratives emanating from this study's data collection methods. These visual metaphors are presented through ceramics sculpture, and other materials, which I found added value in communicating the meanings and symbolisms they carry.

### **4.1 THE MEANING OF VISUAL METAPHORS**

My artworks seek to portray and map out a personal observation of human cooperative behaviour, conformity, and obsession, associated with the modern Xhosa funerals. The body of work is classified in three series. The first one is entitled 'Chief Mourner' – a video installation presenting still images of myself in performance, in the role of a female chief mourner, in costume both as a Xhosa traditional/rural woman and a modern bereaved wife/mother. The photographs are manipulated using Adobe Photoshop and show myself as a recurrent figure of the chief mourner who is present at each and every funeral. The series is a record of all the funerals I attended, amounting to fifty two, and representing every Saturday of a year. In the Eastern Cape, where this study was conducted, Saturday is the most popular day for funerals, and, as a result of this, three to five or even more funerals can take place concurrently in one graveyard or within a community where burial is done at the family home graveyard.

The second series, 'Seat of the Soul', an installation and representation of a deceased chief mourner, is indicated by a Methodist woman uniform composed of a red blouse with a belt and a white hat and collar. These objects are placed on an elevated surface symbolic of a stage. The blouse is surrounded by miniature coffins, caskets, and lit candles. Lit candles are a dominant feature in a bereaved home during the days leading up to the burial. Every visitor who comes to pay tribute to the deceased is aware that a candle has to burn continuously, and for this reason, 'candle money' is contributed as donations.

The third series, entitled “*Ukufa kusembhizeni*” (meaning death is from within or we are the cause of our demise) is an installation composed of an industrial sanding machine fed with small coffins and caskets instead of wooden planks, to produce an end result of sawdust residue. The series is synonymous with the set-up at a grave site, presenting itself as a production line where coffins and caskets are piled up inside a modern cooking pot, waiting to go through the abrasive sanding machine, and ultimately to a mass grave. The machine is symbolic of modern society which dictates a certain way of life, while society feels obliged to conform and knuckle down in fear of rejection or exclusion.

#### 4.1.1 Chief Mourner’s Performance

I began this series by gathering photographs from the funerals of my parents and other family members. I then studied the mannerisms of chief mourners and realised that they all alluded to a similar disposition, such as looking down with clenched or folded arms.

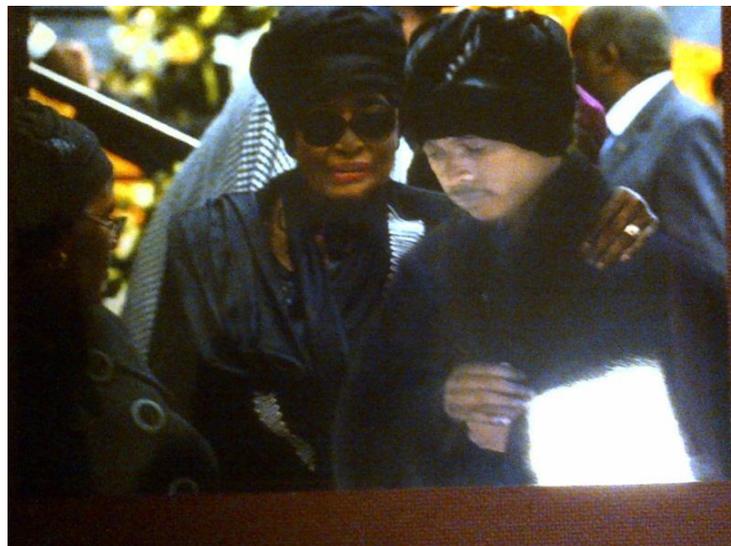


Figure 4.1: Siphe Potelwa “Chief Mourner Empathise” photo-shopped photograph, 2014



**Figure 4.2: Siphe Potelwa “Chief Mourner Obsession 1” photo-shopped photograph, 2014**



**Figure 4.3: Siphe Potelwa “Chief Mourner Obsession 2” photo-shopped photograph, 2014**



**Figure4.4: Siphe Potelwa “Chief Mourner In Action 1” photo-shopped photograph, 2014**

I observed this posture and looked for other familiar, similar signs in other chief mourners. The downcast eyes and clenched arms were confirmed as the popular posture. Images of myself with friends or relatives at each and every funeral I attended were captured and manipulated using Adobe Photoshop (Figs 4.1-4.10).

After studying these photographs I replaced the chief mourner’s image with my own, dressed and disguised as a female chief mourner. I realised that male chief mourners were not as distinct as their female counterparts, and I was intrigued by the different postures and dresses of women which vary from class to class. This exercise allowed me to empathise with the feelings of the chief mourner during the burial act. My goal as researcher was ultimately to critique the obsession, extravagance, and lavishness that is prevalent during the burial of close relatives amongst Xhosa people. This extravagance is also very evident in the outfits of some of the women chief mourners especially modern women. The variation in the outfits of women chief mourners fascinated me, ranging from well-worn shweshwe long skirts and aprons to fashionable expensive dresses complimented by high-heels and flashy handbags.

After consulting with the informants some of whom are included in these photographs, I added the sunglasses, not only for concealing the identity of participants but also to symbolise a barrier, highlighting the forced altruism involved in the pressurised cooperative behaviour during the burial rituals.



**Figure 4.5:** Siphe Potelwa “Chief Mourner In Action 2”, staged performance, photo-shopped photograph, 2014



**Figure 4.6:** Siphe Potelwa “Chief Mourner In Action 3” staged performance photo-shopped photograph, 2014



**Figure 4.7:** Siphe Potelwa “Chief Mourner In Action 4”, staged performance, photo-shopped photograph, 2014



**Figure 4.8:** Siphe Potelwa “Chief Mourner – Duress I”, staged performance, photo-shopped photograph, 2014

Another motive for choosing to be a widow rather than a widower is to express the extra mile widows face as chief mourners compared to their male counterparts. According to my informants, a wife has to mourn the death of her husband for a period of a year if the death was natural, and for three to six months if the cause of death was an accident. Widowers, on the other hand,

are expected to mourn for only the period of their compassionate leave as they are workers at mines or elsewhere away from home. One of the reasons for this is that, in traditional Xhosa culture, women are expected to be tolerant, patient, and to honour their husbands even after death. Ironically, this tradition has not yet changed for women even though many are now working. They are expected to mourn in black or blue clothes for a year, even at work.



**Figure 4.9:** Siphe Potelwa “Chief Mourner – Duress II”, staged performance, photo-shopped photograph, 2014



**Figure 4.10:** Siphe Potelwa “Chief Mourner – Duress III”, staged performance, photo-shopped photograph, 2014

#### 4.1.2 THE SEAT OF THE SOUL

'Seat of the Soul' is based on the researcher's observation that in each village there are one or two members who will always be seen at the beginning and end of every funeral as if their lives are about burying people. When I grew up, I used to hear my parents talking about a woman who used to live about two houses from ours who was called "*selekhona*" meaning "she is already here". During this research I have come across such regular funeral attendees who appear as if they are possessed by the spirit of dying people. This behaviour can be interpreted as being obsessive. Modern people often find themselves immersed in altruistic and cooperative behaviours, without realising their obsessions until it is too late. People in modern society are fast becoming almost robotic, conforming to societal expectations without giving time to the how, where or why. 'Seat of the Soul' 2014 is a representation of reminiscences and nostalgia associated with obsessive behaviour that most of us find ourselves trapped in with little or no time to correct our ways. It should be viewed as a cautionary wake-up alarm and a call to question the way in which we do things, things that very often end up obliterating our uniqueness. The church uniform, the red blouse and hat and collar are symbolic of the absence of the diligent funeral patron, whilst the lit candles, coffins, and caskets represent all the departed people he/she buried during his/her life time. The flickering light becomes a symbol of hope (Figs 4.11-4.12).

In my search for answers I believe there is still hope for our people to find solutions to alter their ways in a more positive way. During the development of this research, many people with whom I had informal conversations expressed their disapproval at the extravagance associated with modern burial practice. They all felt that a middle ground or intervention strategy in dealing with the new concept of lavish burials could be found by generations to come. Thus my practical work also seeks to unbundle the stereotypes emanating from altruistic and societal conformist behaviour towards engaging the younger generation to renegotiate and moderate these obscure cultural acts.



Figure 4.11: Siphe Potelwa “Seat of the soul – Ukuxhonywa kwebhatyi” installation, 2014



**Figure 4.12: Siphe Potelwa “Seat of the soul (detail)” 2014**

The visual metaphors emanating from this study are not meant to condemn these modern burial practices completely but to advocate an alternative solution so that individuals do not find themselves conforming to these extravagant burial practices at the expense of their economic well-being. The ‘Seat of the Soul’ installation seeks to address the impact of social conformity on the individual. Viewers relate to this work by being overwhelmed by the obsessive nature of the absent soul’s actions, which are hidden by the modern robotic life we are all experiencing.

#### **4.1.3 UKUFA KUSEMBHIZENI (WE ARE THE CAUSE OF OUR DEMISE)**

Africans in general and Xhosa people in particular, derive their idiomatic expressions and metaphors from their day-to-day activities. This is because idioms and metaphors were used to teach the young about the facts of life, and the stories used had to be accessible to or have meaning for their children. The Xhosa idiom or metaphor “*ukufa kusembhizeni*”, which means ‘the cause of a disease or death is within the family’ is a popular diagnostic phrase used by traditional healers or sangomas when consulted to detect the cause of ill health in a patient, and hopefully cure it. This diagnosis usually results in more damage because the family of the sick person is left guessing who might be the culprit who inflicted this sickness, as the sangoma does not say exactly what it is that is the cause. When family members return from the sangoma their attention is focused on speculation and finding the person who is the cause of the disease, rather than paying attention to the sick person if he/she is still alive. This neglect sometimes results in the sick person dying, making the family even more angry and pointing fingers at one another, even to the extent of killing each other as an act of revenge. This act is a disease in its own right, causing family members to become mistrustful of other members, or become divided, usually over something that could have been avoided.

‘*Ukufa kusembhizeni*’ is an installation composed of three parts (Figs 4.13-4.15). The first is a big pot filled with multiple miniature caskets and coffins, some of which are scattered on the floor. The middle part of the installation consists of an industrial sanding machine through which the coffins and caskets pass through, supposedly for refinement or further modelling. They emerge, however, ready for internment as the slider channels them forward to a mass grave which is the third part of the installation.



Figure 4.13: Siphe Potelwa, *Ukufa kusembizeni*, Installation Set Up, 2014

The pot in this installation replaces the traditional pot, as this idiom is as old as culture itself. A pot in virtually all cultures is associated with food to nourish our bodies and even our souls as we continue living because we are fed. If the pot has poison in it all those who eat from it are destined to die. This means that the pot has to be purified in order to be safe for the holding of food. This installation is meant to confront the viewer. Firstly, the pot is huge, about four times life size, and the machine is slightly smaller than the pot.



**Figure 4.14:** Siphe Potelwa *Ukufa kusembizeni, Pot, Clay and Zinc, 2014*

The sanding machine in this piece represents human altruistic behaviour, cultural conformity, and social cooperative behaviour, all social constructs

that according to this study, require to be re-negotiated so that they may benefit society.

'*Ukufa kusembhizeni*' also highlights the habit of following a practice simply because it is the norm, revealing that it is done without questioning the context in which it was first practised. Again the metaphor of a robotic being in 'Seat of the Soul' is repeated here, referring to the unquestioning habits of people who simply respond to societal cooperation even if it is detrimental to their well-being. The use of the sanding machine is again the need for one to question these issues and not to be manipulated within negative altruism by societal conformist attitude.



**Figure 4.15: Siphe Potelwa, *Ukufa kusembhizeni*, Mass grave Clay and plastic mat, 2014**

The use of multiple coffins and caskets is associated with the obsessive behaviour within which the Xhosa community find themselves, trapped and blind to the danger. The choice of objects, such as sunglasses, a pot, coffins, caskets, and a sanding machine in my artworks depicts the

modern influence which has brought about positive changes. This study, however, advocates a conciliated modification of some of the modern changes to ensure human and cultural dignity. One should consider that there is no such thing as a classless society and inequality is a human feature dating as far back as pre-civilisation. During the modern era, inequality is caused by a number of factors including socio-economic, socio-political, and socio-cultural affiliations to mention a few. People from these affiliated factors may reside in the same neighbourhood and aspire to be equal, but this is not possible. This means that one has to consider one's individual economic status before indulging in things that are considered to be the standard way of doing things, such as the now-endorsed Xhosa burial practice.

## CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

The vast majority of people within Xhosa communities are forced to adapt to burial practices imposed by relatives and the community through cultural transmission. As a result, they find themselves confronted by and subjected to large financial burial commitments that force them to borrow from micro-lenders, popularly known as *omatshonisa*. Nowadays, the cost of burial has escalated in such a way that the poor cannot afford to meet the financial commitment that go hand-in-hand with current practises at lavish funerals (Ngubane, 2004: 171). According to Ngubane (2004: 172), the burden associated with the obsessive and extravagant burial is high, especially when one takes into consideration AIDS/HIV related deaths, the increase in the population in urban areas, unemployment, and poverty. The high cost of funerals continues to pose great challenges for everyone.

Added to this, is the shame and feeling of failure should one's burial process not match up in extravagance or slickness, and the community is the judge of this. Scant attention is paid to the emotional needs of the bereaved, but rather notice is taken of the decor, the food, the seating, and the casket. In this scenario the funeral shops ply their wares through blatant product advertising and sweet words. At some point, to ensure the survival of Xhosa traditional burials, the chain must be broken. This is difficult to do. Death is our most certain knowledge, the death industry is both ever-lasting and now highly lucrative, and it would appear, is more intent on profit than providing for the humanitarian needs of its clients. In conjunction with this are the bereaved themselves, in their hour of sorrow they must put on the face of performance and cooperation, dance to the tune of materialism and the new. Society constantly embraces the new, it is how we progress, but for something as simple as death and burial, since it's what most world cultures do, we should look back to our roots to remind ourselves that the act of saying goodbye is one-on-one, is about personal memory and physical end. We know the dead never leave us, in

a spiritual sense, and that we are bonded forever. In the melee of modern funerals the true meaning of traditional burial is suffocating under a load of peripheral novelties.

## **5.1 INTERPRETATION OF THE FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Commercialisation, altruistic human behaviour, cultural conformity, otherness, and ritualistic obsession were found to be the most influential elements which led modern society into accepting popular practices. These elements are manifested by the need for individuals to conform to what is seen as acceptable in the culture within which one associates oneself. Individuals are likely to imitate the common type of behaviour practised among their cultural parents disproportionately (Boyd and Richerson, 1982: 329). Kipuri (2009: 52) also attests to this view and states that, "indigenous communities have kept their culture alive by passing on their worldview, their knowledge and know-how, their arts, rituals and performance from one generation to the next". Owing to the knowledge gap emanating from weak cultural transmission, communities seem to accept any practice that is commonly available to them. The acceptance of new practices leads to adulteration and/or complete neglect of the old practice, often to the detriment of the community, both in the short and long term. The keeping up of appearances, especially within the burial framework, has taken on disproportionate importance. Emphasis has shifted from the simple, plain, dignified burial to that of the performance stage, complete with set, props, curtains, players and audience. It is, for some, Saturday afternoon's entertainment, with food and drink. It could almost be seen in a humorous light if it was not for the seriousness of the situation.

## **5.2 COMMERCIALISATION, ALTRUISTIC HUMAN BEHAVIOUR AND CULTURAL CONFORMITY**

Modern burial practice has become the norm and is seen as the best 'send off' for a loved one. Modernity has to do with change over time that manifests science and technology. According to the American Heritage Dictionary (2000), the term 'modern' was first recorded in 1585 in the perspective "of present or recent time" and relates to a recently developed or advanced style, technique, or technology. Ngubane (2000: 171), on the other hand, states that the term 'modern' can be perceived as a system that depicts a lack of respect for a traditional belief system. He further claims that modernism creates challenges for Xhosa people as they have to juggle two distinct practices in order to appease their culture whilst at the same time seek acceptance within the modern dispensation.

Young people particularly sit astride this challenge, having one foot in cultural practice, while the other itches to embrace the new. It is apparent too that one culture's success with a modern practice might not transfer successfully to another's. Finding the temerity to pick out the beneficial aspects of modernity while maintaining traditional traditions would be the ideal situation, although virtually impossible to achieve due to the rampant charge of modernity.

'Commercialisation' is a term associated with modernism and "is a process where markets are established" for a specific type of goods and/or services resulting in an increase in competitive pressures on both the suppliers and the consumers (Australian MAB-MIAC, 1992: 1). This competition manifests itself in a number of ways affecting the manner of doing things by both the supplier and consumers. For example, suppliers add sophisticated and unnecessary features to their products in order to attract consumers, whilst the consumer, by wanting to belong to a certain class, ends up following what seems to be the norm, a form of cultural coercion disguised as cooperation. Drastic changes occurred most

evidently from 1994 when many people saw the potential financial benefits of choosing a career in the funeral undertaking business arena. This has resulted in a highly competitive industry amongst service providers as they vie for the next burial, and explains the advertising techniques employed by undertakers on television, billboards, etc. as well as the subversive marketing they perform at actual burials. Social relationships, such as social power, status, and influence, acquired for social survival through conformity are at stake in this competitive display by the undertaking industry.

A study conducted in 2008 by the US National Bureau of Economic Research observed that the funeral arrangements of almost 4000 KwaZulu-Natal households between 2003 and 2005 cost on average the equivalent of a year's income for an adult's funeral (Rumney, 2012: 1). Rumney (2012: 1) further claimed that funerals have become sites of conspicuous consumption, often involving personalised memorabilia such as T-shirts and mugs depicting the deceased, limousine hearses, video recordings, and a never-ending supply of freshly slaughtered meat, salads, soda, and the ubiquitous samp and beans (*umgqusho*). This way of expressing grief can be associated with showing off which is financial suicide if the bereaved have no or little funds.

Empowering the community by educating them to the fact that some practices need to be weighed against individual circumstances is urgently required, in order to reaffirm important cultural uniqueness. Xhosa communities could go through reorientation in which Mhlanga (2004: 18) cautions as follows:

Giving someone a respectful send-off when they die is admirable. The family should decide to make the funeral fit the money available and not allow sadness and grief to overpower their common sense. Do not turn the funeral into fashion show and buy new clothes to impress. Refrain from redecorating the house and

the bedroom for mourning as the mourning period is also a major contributing cost which leaves debt behind for the family.

Mhlanga's caution confirms that changing this way of 'send-off' is necessary, especially taking into consideration the economic recession facing the country and the world at large. Based on Mhlanga's caution, a need to re-educate modern society towards liberating themselves from the exaggerated altruism and cultural cooperation can never be overemphasised. And that is no easy task.

During development of this study, I had a number of conversations with friends and relatives who alluded to the concern this research interrogates, meaning that people are aware of the unnecessary extravagance associated with the modern burial practice. The social constructs of human altruism, cultural conformity, and social cooperation, however, seem very powerful to overcome. Communities might need to collectively discuss this problem, stressing the financial burdens placed on the bereaved, and consider reverting to the traditional template of burial.

### **5.2.1 OTHERNESS**

According to Block (2001), in the period following black liberation the practice of lavish funerals bearing new symbolical significance, indicating an aimless value system driven by the pressures of society, has created a precedence for the appreciation of monetary-driven burial practices. In this context, if an individual is not following the accepted norm, he/she adopts the state of 'otherness'. This adoption of otherness is a result of a socially constructed order of relations. Since the development of social phenomena is a product of a consensus of individuals within a social group, supporting an ideology, it is, therefore, also acceptable that the same group of social individuals have the capacity to change the pre-requisite factors involved in carrying forward this cultural ideology.

It is clear that a solution needs to be devised to prevent the present practice continuing, for it is a system that neglects the history and culture of the people. Artists have a big role to play in this regard by using art to restore lost values. Art is an important communication tool accessible to everyone, and in this study I have made use of popular visual objects in a confrontational and masquerading manner to mitigate the need to alter obsessive practice by re-claiming our dignity.

### **5.2.2 RITUALISTIC OBSESSION**

A ritual is a sequence of activities involving gestures, words, and objects performed in a designated place and according to a set sequence (Merriam-Webster 2010) taking place according to the tradition and culture of that society. The burial practice among Africans and, in particular, Xhosa people follows a number of rituals. In this study, it has been confirmed that one of the reasons associated with extravagant burial practice could be related to the misinterpretation, or the “mismatch” (Argyris, 1993: 3) of African traditional burial rituals among other things.

For example the modern ‘after tears’ ritual could be a misinterpretation of the traditional ‘spade cleansing ritual’ which was done about a week after the burial as a gesture of gratitude to the people who had assisted the bereaved family with burial tasks. A social control which was used to maintain order during the traditional setting may be irrelevant to modern society and requires modification. The cleansing ritual called *ukuxukuxa* which is usually performed after the burial is sometimes exaggerated, and yet its symbolism can never be over emphasised as it is a form of closure for the close relatives who nursed the deceased. This exaggeration is practiced by some families who make a big fuss over this ritual, slaughtering a goat or sheep to provide a feast. Yet an informant in this study explained that this ritual is supposed to be a closed family affair and not a public event as is the case in some modern families. A need for

informed cultural knowledge is thus necessary before the traditional cultural custodians disappear.

Finally, this study does not suggest that all aspects of the modern burial practice are unnecessary, but it calls for retaining the positive aspects which support our stability and dignity. Submitting to better solutions does not mean that death should not be respected, but the study advocates a balance between the past and present ways of living.

The gradual acceptance of change to the set system could be through a subtle reorientation of elements such as attitudes, values, ideologies, and role models, amongst others. This means influencing the non-material aspects to affect the material aspects of the tradition by dealing with the debilitating factors that leave the bereaved family with a devastating ordeal of debt. Recognition of the economic status of the bereaved family has to be taken into consideration by the extended family during this time, so as to prevent the incurrence of debt through rash and confused decisions.

Our modern daily lives are filled with materialism and commercialism, we cannot escape the trap or trappings of our consumerist world. I am of the view that we should be looking back at our rich heritage and history to aid us in the elimination of frivolities that have invaded our Xhosa burials. It is fitting that when we die we revert to a simpler way of disposal, the way our forebears and ancestors did, attaching more importance to the life and afterlife of the deceased, rather than the artificial, grandiose farewells that are so prevalent today.

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## **APPENDIXES**

### **Appendix A: Information letter regarding research project**

#### **INFORMATION LETTER REGARDING RESEARCH PROJECT**

##### **UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA**

**Department of:** Art History, Visual Arts and Musicology

**Degree of study:** Master of Visual Arts (98573)

**Title of research study:**

**The visual narrative relating to social performance during burial**

**Name of the supervisor:** Dr N Mpako

**Name of the researcher/student:** Siphe Potelwa

I am currently undertaking this research study with the aim to investigate the visual narrative relating to social performance during burial by some black South African people. Through the qualitative approach I would like to interview traditional leaders, religious leaders, community members and artists and media communicators.

I would like to appeal to all of you to assist me by participating in this research. Participation is not forced, as you can withdraw any time. I will use the information for study purposes only.

Thus, your participation will be highly appreciated.

Yours faithfully

Siphe Potelwa

Contact Numbers: 071-493 4169/073- 1779 245

**Consent Form**

I .....have received the request information about the research by Potelwa Siphe for Master in Visual Arts at the University of South Africa.

I am aware that the interview may be included in the research and was inform that I may withdraw my consent at any time and aware that my participation is voluntary.

I am aware that all data collection will be kept safe and confidential. No information that is confidential will be published with my consent.

I agree/ disagree freely to participate to his research.

.....  
Participant signature

Date:.....

Researcher contact details: Potelwa Siphe, Cell: 071-493 4169/ 073-1779 245

## **Appendix B: Interview questions for key informants**

### **INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR KEY INFORMANTS**

1. What can you tell me about Xhosa burial practice in the current times?
2. Why are some black people performing burial practice differently?
3. How can the traditional leaders or religious leaders educate the modern society about good and bad practise especially with regards to extravagant burial practices?
4. Do you think that there is reason for people to spend lavishly when burying their loved one?
5. How did Xhosa people get into this obsessive, fancy life style during burial?
6. What are the positive and negative aspects you have observed about the modern burial practices?
7. How do you or people perceive the current system (modern) of burial against the previous system (tradition) of burial?
8. What role do you think artists can play in educating society through art with regards to burial practice?

## **Appendix C: radio station interview (SA FM)**

### **RADIO STATION INTERVIEW (SA FM)**

#### **Contents:**

Lerato Mafisa, Funeral director of South Africa, 30 May 2014 at 11:00am to 12:00am

Rev Pataty, General Secretary of National Churches, 30 May 2014 at 11:00am to 12:00am

**Interviews were on the media records and precise of this study. The above people were selected for different reasons and there was an opportunity for viewer's inputs with their observations and experience on the subject (Cost of Funerals)**

#### **Mafisa Lerato was a guest in the talk show about cost of funerals**

1. What did you observe during burial practice, something positive and negative in our everyday life?

I get enough observation from our client's when they plan or organise for funeral. Something positive that they did is to portray love to their decease because they want to do their last best for him or her and negative is the people who want to do their best in funeral but they do not afford even to buy coffin or caskets.

2. Do you think that there are barriers that make people to make fancy funerals, if so, could you tell me why?

Not at all, no barriers but people go to micro loans for funeral because they want to impress the people who are going to attend that funeral.

### **Rev Pataty was a guest in the talk show about cost of funerals**

1. What did you observe during burial practice, something positive and negative in our everyday life?

It is not about observing bad and good in funeral but for us as Ministries is to console the family by the word of God.

2. Do you think that there are barriers that make people to make fancy funerals, if so, could you tell me why?

Yes there are barriers the system; people should fight the system of fancy funeral.

### **Comments of the viewers about the cost of funerals**

**Rose from Durban-** expensive funerals killed almost most the living people after funerals who are nursing their egos during funeral.

**Pitso from Mpumalanga-** I am worried about Black funeral hospitality during funeral that families are wasting a lot of money for food.

**Vuyiswa from Johannesburg-** this cost of funeral is a foreign fashion of buying caskets that also decomposed early like coffin.

**Rabantungwana from Durban-** disagree with other viewers that black people's funerals are extravagant. It is us who tell the people about loose

and as black people we have a long chain of relative that should be catered for during funeral.