

THE DEVELOPMENT OF NGUNI DRAMA.

BY

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PROEFSKRIF VIR DIE

B.A. (HONS.)

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UNIVERSITEIT VAN SUID-AFRIKA

1965

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## THE DEVELOPMENT OF NGUNI DRAMA

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SUBMITTED TO SATISFY THE REQUIREMENTS  
FOR THE DEGREE OF HONOURS B.A. OF THE  
DEPARTMENT OF BANTU LANGUAGES IN THE  
UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA.

JANUARY 1965.

0.1 Drama signifies action. While a novel is written to be read, drama is designed for representation by actors who impersonate the characters of its story and among whom the dialogue and narrative are distributed. Thus drama of necessity must have action, character, dialogue, atmosphere and a certain idea. While it is true that the origin in drama lay in performance, there is drama that is for reading only. While in western drama we cannot help but associate drama with the theatre, Nguni drama is usually designed for reading and in order to be enacted it needs some rearrangement to adapt it for the stage.

0.2 Drama, just like poetry, is an emotional experience. We may find ourselves laughing or crying as we proceed from act to act with the actor or when reading. It is an art but the dramatist works with words and has to so arrange his words that he appeals to our imagination and emotion where we cannot see the actors. The dramatist employs graphic symbols that cannot be properly translated into language.

0.3 The novel is self-contained, i.e. it provides within its compass everything that the writer deems necessary for the comprehension and enjoyment of his work. Drama is not in this sense self-contained. It implies everywhere the cooperation of elements outside itself. What we read is a little more than an outline and this must be completed by the stage and the actor. In the mere perusal of a play, therefore, we labour under certain drawbacks and difficulties for much of its effect is likely to be lost upon us for want of those continual appeals to the imagination, those descriptions, explanations and personal commentaries which in a novel help us to visualise scenes, understand people, estimate motives etc. Fortunately modern plays have provided for the reader by little explanatory notes at the beginning of each scene/act, and gestures and appearance are indicated, thus helping the reader to understand and appreciate better.

### ESSENTIALS OF DRAMA

1.1 There are certain important points which a drama should have in order to qualify as one. These are:-

(a) The dramatis personae or characters. No drama can be a drama without the character or <sup>ac</sup>char<sub>an</sub>ters. There are the models with which the dramatist excels or fails. It is through his manipulation of his characters that the effect of the drama is brought out. It is through the characters that the playwright reveals certain incidents. The relationship between the characters should be shown by the presence of the three elements;- viz.

(i) A protagonist - This is the main character around whom all the action is concentrated. The crisis has its direct bearing on the protagonist.

(ii) The antagonist - This is the person who is responsible for the crisis that affects the protagonist; he is the cheater, the prosecutor or the menacer.

(iii) The tritagonist - This is the force operating between the protagonist and the antagonist so as to cause the conflict or friction between the two. Any drama may have more than one tritagonist, may be, inter alia the cause of the conflict, the object which is contested by the two parties, the instrument in the hands of the two opposing parties, and the person who assists the protagonist in his ultimate release or victory or a person who reconciles the two parties.

(b) 1.2 The dramatic conflict

Every dramatic story arises out of some conflict. It arises out of some clash of opposed individuals or passions or interests. It may be a clash between good and evil. This conflict may assume various other shapes e.g. the struggle may be waged by the hero against fate or circumstance or within himself. The conflict may arise between two laws, ideologies and cultures and these are most common in Nguni drama.

(c) 1.3 The atmosphere;

In a play there should be an atmosphere of something universal, i.e. there should be the incarnation of some general human principle. There should be a connection with the real world in which the people live and where the events take place.

(d) 1.4 The dramatic thread

The dramatic thread is embodied in the plot. The scenes in a play provide the links of the story and bind the plot together. All the incidents of a drama are threaded by the scenes which all develop the plot that reveals the theme systematically and effectively.

(e) 1.5 Just as the conflict and dramatis personae are important so is the plot in drama. With the beginning of the conflict the real plot begins and with its conclusion the real plot ends. The complications which arise from the initial clash of opposed forces will as a rule, continue to increase until a point is reached at which a decisive turn is taken in favour of one side or the other, after which the progress of events will be inevitably, though often with minor interruptions, towards the final triumph of good over evil or evil over good.

1.6 Thus the dramatic design can be summarised as follows:-

1) Firstly we have the origin of the conflict. The dramatist gives us the situation and characters from which the conflict arises.

2) The action or conflict rises or <sup>or</sup> complication becomes evident, comprising that part of the play in which the conflict continues to increase in intensity while the outcome remains uncertain.

3) The climax, crisis or turning point at which one of the contending forces obtains such controlling power that henceforth its ultimate success is assured.

5/.... 4) The

4) The falling action, resolution or denouement, comprising that part of the play in which the stages in the movements of events towards this success are marked out.

5) The conclusion or catastrophe in which the conflict is brought to a close. In a comedy this stage will take a gradual withdrawal of the obstacles, the clearing away of the difficulties and misunderstandings by which the wishes of the hero or heroine have been thwarted and their good fortune jeopardized. The above dramatic design has influenced some writers to divide a play into five acts, but sometimes the division is not logical with the setting.

#### EARLY FORMS OF NGUNI DRAMA

2.1 Written drama is the latest development in Nguni literature. Oral Nguni drama can be traced back to verse and songs. Just as the Greeks who formulated certain songs to be sung during the festivities of Dionysus, so did the Nguni during their special occasions. Such songs were mainly social and sung accompanied by different dances. Occasions like UMTSHILO wabakhwetha (the dance of the initiates) were marked by the recitation of certain praises which were learnt at the initiation school and a special attire and mask helped to bring a good dramatic effect. The early form of Greek drama compares favourably with the early form of Nguni drama. In Greek drama the dramatic effect in the songs was brought out by the choral leader who was later replaced by an actor. The actor used a mask to impersonate several characters until the mask was done away with when more characters were introduced to the stage. The chorus, in Greek drama was virtually the protagonist.

2.2 The early Nguni drama was closely related to traditional poetry which was either sung or recited.

According to Vilakazi <sup>1</sup> primitive Nguni poetry is divided into four main types viz. (i) Epic (ii) Lyric (iii) Dramatic (iv) Didactic. Traditional Nguni drama was found in

- (a) IZIBONGO which were composed on certain ceremonial occasions in honour of events or of important personages like a King, hero, queen or a woman of beauty. They are however composed on animals like bulls. The Imbongi showed the characteristics in early childhood by praising other boys and his father's beasts. Of this Tiyo Soga <sup>2</sup> says,

"Ubonga xa kuhleliweyo, etshayelela mhla lifayo,  
Woqeqeshelwa ukubonga abakhwetha likomkhulu ahlawulwe mhla  
liphumayo isuthu - iqandusele ke inkewu ngolu suku" -

(b) Music - Songs.

2.3 These were known as IZINGOMA. They are characterised by the chorus. There is always the leader who introduces the song and the chorus joins to give a good dramatic effect. They may be divided into three main types viz:-

- 1) Imiduduzelo

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1) Vilakazi; Nguni Oral and written literature in Nguni

Ph.D. Thesis Wits.

2) Intlalo kaXhosa p.10.

7/.....(ii) Amahubo



(ii) Amahubo and Iziqubulo - Xhosa Igqatyu Hlubi Umguyo.

(iii) Indlamu.

(1) Imiduduzelo

These consisted of children's songs and lullabies. Vilakazi says primitive Nguni drama is seen in simple baby plays which are sometimes sung, and also in hunting plays. The following is an example of a Hlubi lullaby sung by one person.

“ Thula mntana thula,  
Ndihlange namawelekazana  
Ephethiziqana ngemilonyana  
Ndathi ndisikele ndenzu'umlomo  
Athi, 'Bika kuMagoma, wabika kuNkosi  
Unkosi kuNkosikazi, Wathi  
Izilo zindingqongile  
Zindibona ndingenangubo  
Ingubo yam yemka namaNyangaza  
Thula Thula mntana. ” /

Another well known lullaby is Nogayoyo where we have the leader who asks and the reply comes from the impersonator, and the chorus.

Strophe	Wena Nogayoyo, uyawaphetheni?
Antistrophe	Ndiyawaphethinja.
Strophe	Uyawayisaphi?
Ant.	Ndiyawayisendle.
Strophe	Kunanin'ekhaya?
Ant.	NdoyikuGayoyo ekhala enxuweni esithi Tsiyo! Tsiyo!
Chorus.	Ndafika kumoni entlantlathi nkobe Ndathi ndikhongoze etc.

(ii) Amahubo, Iziqubulo, Igwatyu, Umguyo. These include songs that are sung during the times of war and these are called Iziqubulo in Zulu, Igwatyu in Xhosa, and Umguyo in Hlubi. They are sung to instil bravery and a national pride. The music is dramatic with a peculiar dance accompanied by the brandishing of spears, shields and knobkerries.

According to Vilakazi they induce emotive restlessness through the fear of annihilation and the longing for glory after victory. The excitement is not only derived from the rhythmic swinging and thumping of the feet but from the words and melody of the song composed to the dancing step.

e.g.

Leader. Wayihlaba ngomkhonto  
Chorus. Wondindwa ngamabandla ezizweni  
Wayinyathela ingwe ingwe yezizwe.  
Leader. Wayihlaba etc.

(iii) Indlamu. According to Vilakazi Indlamu is composed of love songs that are accompanied by dance. The following song refers to a young man by his lover who is missing him.

'Wosebenzubuye

Ngilala ngesaka, sebenzubuye!

Indlamu in Xhosa is a social gathering for the young men and women up to the middle aged group. This mainly consisted of songs accompanied by vigorous dancing and rhythmic movements of the parts of the body. Vilakazi<sup>1</sup> writes "Dancing in African Society is not merely a recreation

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1. Vilakazi; Nguni Oral and Written Literature in Nguni  
Ph.D. thesis Wits.

as ~~et es on~~ <sup>it is in</sup> European Society but it forms an essential part of native life and is of great psychological and social value. Whether the dance is accompanied by mere clapping of hands or by vocal as well as instrumental music it produces the desired emotional results in performers." The communal dancing is in itself art. The mental configurations it evokes in the minds of the onlookers and performers correspond to those evoked by the poet in the recitation of his Izibongo.

### NGUNI PLAYS.

3.1 The dramatic movement in Nguni started in Natal under the influence of Chief Inspector of Native education, Dr. C.T. Loram. During the beginning of 1920 different colleges composed plays which were patterned along the lines of European drama. Most of these were on religious subjects such as JOSEPH IN EGYPT, the PRODIGAL SON etc. Some students at Marianhill composed and dramatised one-act plays which were adopted mostly from folk-tales. According to Vilakazi, the main feature of these plays was the rapid, dramatic effect of movement and change of scene on the stage. The plays were presented with a naivete which the white stage would find impossible to imitate. The style of acting was freer than that which we see in a modern stage. The producer had to rely, not only on the written version but also on his own knowledge of animal lore, language and behaviour. The British Drama League tried to encourage dramatic consciousness among Africans. People like Mr. Andre van Gyseghe who was pageant-master

at <sup>the</sup> Empire Exhibition held in Johannesburg in 1936 gave encouraging addresses to the Bantu Dramatic Society which later presented THE HAIRY APE, SHE SCOOPS TO CONQUER and LADY WINDERENBERE'S FAN under his guidance. Owing to the lack of interest in literary art and stage production the dramatic movement, however, the interest which the Natal students had while they were at school did not die out completely for they founded dramatic companies. One of these was the Lucky Stars which toured Natal and Transvaal in 1930 and acted two plays UMTAKATHI and UKWESHELA. The early dramatic Societies were coupled with musical items. Great composers like R.T. Calusa published a collection of songs in 1928. Ben Tyamzashe is another Xhosa composer, Myathaza, Majola, Mfamaana and others.

3.2 The first written play in Zulu appeared in 1937. It was Nimrod Ndebele's UBUBUDELE NAMAZIMUZIMU which won the May Esther Bedford competition. This is the only play that has treated a traditional theme successfully. This book has been regarded as the most successful experiment based on the short one-act plays found written by college students in the 1920s. The language used and the dialogue fit very well into the theme of cannibalism. Vilakazi<sup>1</sup> in his criticism says,

"His play catches the attention of the audience and shifts from scene to scene with plausible control of the plot."

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Vilakazi; *Nguni Oral and Written Literature in Nguni*  
Ph.D. thesis Wits.

It is worth noticing that this is the only play that treats of a purely traditional theme. It is interesting to note that the Greek tragedy is drawn from myth, <sup>Kirkwood</sup> ~~Cornill~~ says<sup>1</sup>;

"To some literary critics of our time the proximity of myth and ritual to a literary form constitutes an irresistible lure; it had even been maintained that all literary forms can be derived from patterns of myth and ritual."<sup>1</sup>

Unlike the Greek dramatists who exploited the avenues of their people's rituals and myths and formed a basis of their theme in their serious literature, the Bantu dramatists have left much of this field unexplored although such influence may be traced in some of their literature. However, Mr. Masinga of the Zulu S.A.B.C. broadcast some Zulu plays over the Radio Bantu. In 1941 with Hugh Tracey he wrote CHIEF ABOVE AND CHIEF BELOW which was a musical play for Africans based on a Zulu legend.

3.3. G. Layton Kakana wrote UMDUDO WONONKALA<sup>2</sup> which was intended for dramatisation by school children in the primary schools. It is a combination of the folklore of cannibals and incidents in the home life of modern children with an abundance of colloquialism, Vilakazi says "the language is very conventional and renders the book a pastime rather than a study in literature."<sup>5</sup>

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1. <sup>Kirkwood!</sup> ~~Cornill~~; A study of Sophoclean Drama p.11

2. Book out of print.

3. Vilakazi: ORAL AND WRITTEN LITERATURE IN NIGUMI: P 354  
12/...3.4

3.4 As the time went past the Bantu felt the need for more serious books. While the stage had encouraged more people to produce plays for acting, the need was also felt for the entertainment of the reading public. Thus M. Mbidlana wrote ZANGEN'IINKOMO which appeared in 1954. The play deals with the Lobola custom among the Xhosas of Gcalekaland. Though this would be an interesting theme the plot is badly handled and the unity of the play is lacking. The play is very underdeveloped and marred by the author's attempt to write in verse. The characters do not correspond with a Xhosa pattern in handling matters of Lobola and most unlike Xhosa custom, Jemza and Mapheza discuss most informally the negotiations without telling Khezo the father of the girl whom Mapheza wants for his son. It however opened the way for other Nguni dramatists.

3.6 In Zulu L.L. Mncwango has made a great contribution towards the development of Nguni drama. In 1951 he wrote his first play MANHLA IYOKWENDELA EGODINI. This deals with a very interesting theme in Bantu society which is witchcraft that results from a desperately in love young man. Muzwa who loves Nontula is driven by jealousy to kill Siphango who is Nontula's real lover and also gives a love-charm to the Qhikiza an old girl to put in Nontula's food so that she should love him and if not, die. The young girl dies and Muzwa's wish is fulfilled that if she does not marry him she will die.

The book is a pathetic tragedy which opens with

13/... the death

the death of Nontula's parents who are drowned in a river while they are coming from a hospital. Siphango is portrayed as a steady and helpful man who comforts Nontula during her bereavement. Nontula does not only suffer the loss of her parents but also her lover Siphango and ultimately dies of poison.

Muzwa is portrayed as a weak but proud man, who is confident of his royalty ~~but~~ does <sup>not</sup> stand <sup>competently</sup> against Siphango. The withdoctor tries to encourage him:

"Uqaphele, mntwana, uma ulahla  
ithemba manje ungathathe wone imithi  
yami ingabe isasebenza lutho ---  
Noma kuthiwa isilotsholwa intombi  
iyaye iphume iqome engenye"  
Utshwala buchitheke bugayiwe----" <sup>1</sup>

The author succeeds in his purpose of showing the futility of believing in love-charms and the danger they may cause.

3.7 In 1953 he wrote KUSASA UMNGCWABO WAKHO NAMI which is also a tragedy which deals with the dangers of superstition and primitive way of treating certain infectious diseases like T.B. Nokufa the wife of Nkosi is attacked by T.B. but her husband does not believe in sending her to the hospital and believes in curing her according to Bantu custom - applying emetic - (Imigabho) which only aggravate her health. She is however, taken to hospital on the advice of Mpilo. At this stage T.B. has so advanced that she cannot be cured and she dies. She has already infected her children and husband but they are saved.

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1. Maphla iyokwendela eGodini p.52.

The writer, though dealing with an educational aim has handled his plot in an interesting way. He does not lecture but his aim is successfully brought out by the actors in action. He has succeeded to show the dangers of T.B. and how it spreads. He has also shown the important role played by nurses in saving people and tries to change the bad idea which the primitive people have about hospitalisation.

The plot is well handled and the movement from one situation to the other is satisfactory and the writer sticks to the theme.

3.8 In 1959 Macwango produced one of his best works Ngenzeni which is almost the best in Zulu plays so far. It is a great improvement from his previous two plays. It is a love story where the chief Menziwa wants to marry Mthembu's twin daughters, Zenzile and Zenzisile. Hilwayo, the hero of the play is in love with Zenzile. The other twin, Zenzisile, is quite happy about the idea of being a queen while the other one, Zenzile, cries. They are married according to Native Law and Custom but Zenzile escapes with Hilwayo, whom she loves, to Zululand. The book is full of suspense and the reader is tempted to feel for and be sympathetic with the eloping lovers. The reader is always holding his breath in anticipation of what is going to follow e.g. after Zenzile has eloped with Hilwayo. Inkundla ysithathu Isigcawu Sesithathu p.66.

HILWAYO, " Asihambe nazi nezinja zakhona  
sezibubula, funa zisilandele  
ngomkhondo, abanikaziyo basifice  
basibambe basiqhube bayosingenisa  
esigodlweni."

One is impressed by the presentation of the <sup>problem</sup> at the beginning of the book when the twins are told that they are going to be the queens of the tribe.



However, <sup>one</sup> ~~she~~ is also impressed by the cleverness with which Hilwayo handles the situation and how he escapes death when the chief sends Sibiya and his men to kill him before the wedding day. The characters in the book are well portrayed e.g. Menziwa the selfish chief who exercises his prerogatives to the detriment of his tribesman e.g. when he orders Ndabeni to be brutally murdered because he wants him to tell where Hilwayo is, and Simelane ~~one of~~ the councillors is pleased to execute his duties. Consequently all those connected with the escape of Zenzile are killed, e.g. Simelane, Ndabeni and Sibiya.

The language is simple although he deals with a tribal court i.e. when charges against Ndabeni Simelane and Sibiya <sup>are brought forward</sup> <sup>^^</sup> One can confidently say that this book qualifies as a play.

3.9 A.M. Mmango is another Xhosa playwright. His first book appeared during the late fifties entitled ~~UDUSHA~~ which is based on witchcraft. Nomadinga, chief Zamuxolo's sister is believed to have been bewitched. The chief on the suggestion of his aunt calls for a witchdoctor to smell out the witch. Siqungu, the witchdoctor decides to bring a new idea of not smelling out anyone but ~~UDUSHA~~ the death monster found at the Tsitsa falls. In an attempt to kill Dusha those men who set out with Siqungu quarrel on the way and die. Siqungu undertakes the impossible -

"Kucacile ukuba ngaphandle kokuba kufe  
<sup>ukufa</sup>  
~~ukuba~~ ngokwakhe ukufa akusayi kuze kuphele emhlabeni."

The book shows some dramatic immaturity. The writer does not give the reader a chance to think for himself.

"<sup>1</sup>Bayakwazi ngani ukuba siqungquluze apha? -

Oo baya kubona ngegazi esiliphalazele emahashini."

There are certain unconvincing incidents in the book.

For instance the chief Zamuolo on hearing that Mndindwa and Njongo who had accompanied Siqungu have died, commits suicide because he does not want his name to be associated with this incident. It is also surprising that the old man Mqonga is ignored because of his age whilst the codes of a tribal society are kept by old people. His second book play is LAWILAHLE. He deals with a modern theme of how the cheaters are rewarded. The three brothers in the play want an easy way of getting money and they go to Tyira and cheat the people that they would save them from a calamity that would be caused by the falling of a burning amber which would destroy their property. They levied a fee of a shilling which every head of a kraal should pay. They burnt down the house of a non-believer and convinced the people that it was the fire they were talking about. However, when they got the money they became too greedy and jealous in so much that they fight among themselves. The eldest brother Sidima gave his brothers poisoned beer from which they died and later he stabbed Sangqu. He ultimately burnt the hut in which he was because he realised the seriousness of the scandal.

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1. Indima ye - V - Umboniso 1. p.52.

His latest publication is uCIKIZWA no DIKE<sup>1</sup> which is a love tragedy.

3.10 Ntloko wrote uNGODONGWANE in 1961 which is an historical tragedy in which two sons plan to overthrow their aged father. The theme is an interesting one but the writer has presented it in an unconvincing manner. One is struck by the fact that the conspiracy is planned at a youth dance and the chief's induna unscrupulously asks for the help of the other young men in the dance to kill the chief's sons. It is a very short play and written in simple language.

3.11 J.J. R. JOLOBE a well-known Xhosa novelist and modern poet wrote AMATHUNZOBOMI, a one act play which appeared during the fifties. His play depicts the life of a widow in a city who lives on the illicit sale of liquor. While her husband lived they led a normal and happy family life and his two sons had kept the principles of good discipline until the elder one developed delinquency because he had to stay in the street and keep guard on the police. Her son is sent to a reformatory and she later repents and becomes a church member again. This is a comedy which shows the power of God on those who believe in Him and also the temptation that can steal a hard going person to get money. The book is interesting and depicts the life of the Bantu in any location. It is interesting and does not bore with moralisation. The action is fast from one scene to the other. His humour is subtle.

p.36 Umboniso 5.

Maqhokolo; Uthi nditya ntoni yonke le minyaka.

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1. Not yet available.

wandishiyayo."

3.12 B;J. DUBE wrote INKINGA YOMENDO in 1961 in which he depicts the anxiety which girls have about marriage. The two girls Jabhisa and Miss Mkhwanazi solicit the help of a witchdoctor Pelepele in order to win Gagamela whom they both love. In order to make assurance double sure they also rely on the powers of the Zionist, Dlula. At the end Gagamela marries neither of them but a different girl altogether who does not believe in love charms. The characters are well depicted and it represents a real life situation.

3.13 In the same year M.A.J. BLOSE wrote uQOMISA MINA NJE uQOMISA ILIBA which is also a love play. The girl Nontombi is forced to marry<sup>r</sup> according to Zulu custom a man whom the chief and her father have chosen for her. The tension rises when the girl and her lover decide to elope to the city. The girls' father, being a devoted councillor, traces the girl's footsteps and beats the girls lover to death and forces his daughter to return home but she drowns herself rather than marry a man she does not love. It is a pathetic tragedy.

3.14 A. MTHINGANE wrote INENE NASI ISIBHOZO in 1961.

It is a tragedy in which the Masukude, a widowed step-wife, does not want her step-son, Themba, to marry before her son, Vuma, fearing that no provision will be made for her son. She swears that Themba will not get married before her son and poisons him on the wedding day and he dies instantly. Fearing that Lolo would bring her to book she poisons him but unfortunately the cups which have the poisoned tea are exchanged and Vuma her son drinks the poison whereupon Masukude runs hysterical and threatens to commit suicide. She attacks Lolo with an axe and kills him after which she hangs herself.

The book clearly depicts the life of a step wife in society that she has feelings of insecurity and has a psychological fear that her children may not be well provided for, hence she does not trust anyone even those who are likely to help her.

The language is simple and the dialogue is good with quick action.

3.15 M.A.P. NGANI wrote UMKHONTO KATSHIWO an historical play about the destruction of witches by Tshiwo, the King of the Xhosa. Ngani is better known as a novelist than a playwright. He has written the book with good skill. It is full of passion as innocent people are brutally killed because they have been smelt out as responsible for the deaths of several people among whom was <sup>is</sup> Tshiwo's daughter although we are not told about the latter's death in the book. We sympathise with the chief's warrior Magwaza who, much against his will executes the condemned on the chief's instructions.

He feels that he can no longer execute his duties as a nation killer and even the blood stains haunt him in so much that he commits suicide and the chief suspects that he has been one of the witches and orders his family to be killed also,"

"Sinjalo kakade isiphelo segqwira

Ndatsho namhla ndiyinikezela kuwe ---

"Ngale ntshuntshe, uze ubulale yonke into

eligqwira." Ufe njengalo ke nawe Tshonyane ---

Khwane the only one to execute the death duties becomes sympathetic and saves all those accused of witchcraft.

Khwane hides them at Mngaza forest and they form the AmaGqunukhwebe tribe with the Gqunughwa Hottentots who also dwell in the same forest. At the end the amaGqunukhwebe come to help Tshiwo in his battle against the Hottentots and he welcomes them with open arms.

Though dealing with an historical theme he has arranged it in such a way that the reader does not get bored and enjoys the simple language. The smelling out scene is very interesting showing the psychology which the witchdoctors use on the people.

3.16 G; B; SINXO wrote IMPENE KADEBEZA NEMINYE IMIDLALWANA in 1960 which is a collection of short one act plays. Sinxo is a well-known novelist in Xhosa and is best known for his humour. In this respect he has not fallen short in his plays. He deals with a variety of subjects.

21/.....The

1. Umkhonto kaTshiwo p41

The influence of traditional literature may be seen in his short plays e.g. IINGOZI ZOKUMANGALA in which two domesticated cats run wild because of illtreatment. They steal a piece of cheese and ask Monkey to divide it for them but he eats it all trying to weigh it equally. The two cats go away disappointed. In UMPROFETI OWACIMA ILANGA he is satirising the religious fanatics who, on seeking recognition and high ranks in the church, are easily misled by false prophets. Maqandeka, the prophet arrives at the opportune moment when people complain about the church fees which the minister demands. He enriches himself and forms a separatist church. Ngqikana who suffers from diabetes is believed to be punished because he does not believe in the prophet. However, the prophet is arrested as a criminal. It is after his arrest that the people realised that they have been misled and apologize to Ngqikana.

IMPENE KADEBEZA deals with witchcraft. Debeza a lay preacher is smel<sup>e</sup>led out as the person responsible for Gosani's illness who is also a preacher. Mngwazemfene and his apprentices collect from rumours that Gosani's wife is accused of bewitching her husband with "Mpundulu." To gain Gosani's confidence who is a non-believer in witchcraft, they smell out Debeza but Gosani does not believe them. They collect wild leaves and give them to him but he faints and the minister of religion prays for him and he is then saved by prayer.

One of the most interesting plays in the book is IHLALA LIKA NOMANIKINIKI.

which is based on folk-tales. Skhulumakathethi the prince, is changed by a jealous witch into a snake. Girls come from far and wide to see the prince not knowing that he is a snake. Nomanikiniki an old lady whom the girls pass on the way asks them to help her, but because of her ugliness none of them except Hlungulwana, the ugliest of them all, helps Nomanikiniki. She advises her successfully and gives her a good luck charm which she should apply to transform Skhulumakathethi into a very handsome young man. The author has amusing incidents. His language is not only good but creates a good image of the character in question. One cannot help but imagine the infuriated Nonzwakazi on being asked to lick the old woman's weeping eyes.

"Tyhini nithe aza kuba nani la maxhegwazana!

Uyinyhekevu yenkungevu ehleli ecaleni lendlela  
nje ublalele ukuba uthume abantu izinto  
ezingcole oluhlobo?

Sukalsisimanga santoni esi,

Ukuhlelelwa kwendlela yam yinyhithilili  
yexhego/kazi enje!

The play has a moral that beauty does not mean everything. Even if a person is ugly he may have a kind heart and obedience, which are stepping stones to success in life. Nonzwakazi though beautiful fails to win the prince's love because of her pride and rudeness while Hlungulwana inspite of her ugliness wins Skhuluma's love because of her humility.



In IZINTO ZABAFAZI he satirises the men who are tied to women's apron strings. When a man has involved himself in women's affairs it becomes difficult for him to disentangle himself e.g. Mathambo who has been influenced by his wife to swear at Nonkwetshelile finds it difficult to defend himself when she reminds him of the help they have been offering him. On appealing to his wife for help the latter replies, "

"Ndim obethe landalanda inkcukacha zabafazi ---  
Ungafika indoda ingcangcazelisa intshebe  
ezintweni zabafazi."

IRINIRONGO is another <sup>e</sup> amusing play in which the crow tries to change into a dove but it is not accepted by the doves after they have tested it in a beer drink. It is quite humorous e.g. when he dances vigorously at the beer drink thus making it easy for the doves to discover him because of his bad hoarse voice. When he goes back to his type he is not accepted so that he is neither a crow nor a dove.

LAPA ILIZWE NGEDONKI is another play in the book which is meant for entertainment. Sinko's short plays are already ~~man~~ meant for the stage and his dialogue, action and language are tinged with good humour. The plays though meant for children are suitable for adults too.

3.17 B.B. NDELU wrote MAGEBA LAZIHLOZA in 1962 which is an historical play dealing with the struggle of succession in Zululand. Chief Mpande is not in favour of abdicating in favour of Cetshwayo the rightful heir but prefers Mbuyazi a son of the minor houses.

The struggle ensues among the tribe and Cetshwayo kills Mbuyazi so that his father's words are fulfilled that Cetshwayo should fight for the throne.

The book is the longest play in Zulu with 200 pages. It is written in difficult Zulu. The writer uses<sup>s</sup> figures of speech like metaphor e.g.

"Leliwisa engaligawulelwa yisizwe

Liyangisinda anginemandla okulithwala."

This <sup>he</sup> refers to Cetshwayo whom he hates although he is the tribe's rightful heir. The play is rather long and would need some rearrangement for the stage. He has a good command of the language and a good historical background which makes him to include even unnecessary material e.g. p.22. where Mncocozana and Cetshwayo talk about creation and the cause of death. The conversation is not simple but greatly marked by analogies and idiomatic expressions which mark the beauty of a Bantu language - e.g. Mpande says to Diyikane?

----- " Nawe - ke ngikubize nalabaqophi benjobo  
ebandla

Ukuba nawe ubambe iqhaza kule ndimana

Enomeno owehlula abahlakuli"<sup>1</sup>

There is less action in the book.

3.18 ELLIOT ZONDI wrote a short play UKUFA KUKASHAKA which appeared in 1962. It is anhistorical play about the death of Shaka who is murdered by his brother Dingane. It shows close resemblance to Shakespeare's Julius Caesar.

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1. Inkundla 2 - Umboniso 4 p.42.

Dingane can be compared with Brutus and Mkabayi, his uncle with Casius<sup>S</sup> because Mkabayi encourages Dingane to murder Shaka and free the nation from his tyranny.

Mkabayi says to Dingane

"Uthando Dingane aluboni; uma ususa isithandwa kungene wena esikhundleni saso, aluhlehli alunciphi. Akusoka lingenasici; kangakanani - ke uma ukhulule abantu ovalweni lokufa, ususe ifu elimnyama elibengeme."<sup>1</sup>

Shaka's last words which he utters when he is stabbed by Dingane and Mbopha can be compared with Julius Caesar when he discovers that Brutus his closest friend was among the murderers. "Et tu Brute?" He says to them,

"Yini Dingane, Kwenze njani?

Awu! Niyangigwaza!

Hawu, uwe Mbopha? Kwenze njani bafowethu nangibulalisa nangibulalisa okwamagwala?

--- Yebo Dingane umbango usuka emlotheni, usenzile kakhalelwa.<sup>2</sup>

The writer handles his plot closely and his dialogue is always relevant to his theme and does not waste the readers' time with irrelevant matter though he is dealing with a cumbersome and complicated tribal set up. His characters are well depicted and one could easily deduce from what they say, what kind of people they are.

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1. Inkundla 3 Isigcawu 1. p.24.

2. " 6 " 3 p.45

3.20 HILDA KUPER wrote INHLIZIYO NGUMTHAKATHI which was translated into Zulu by Trevor Cope. This is a unique play so far which deals with the social set up in a poly-gamous society (Isithembu). Sikhova has three wives and as usual the youngest is the one he loves most dearly. Unfortunately she is barren and this is regarded as a stigma in Bantu society in so much that the man marries another wife to bear children for her. In this case Sikhova refuses to marry Bikwaphi's sister whom his father, Ntamo, chooses for him. He proceeds to Johannesburg much against his father's will, to work for his young wife Bikwaphi.

Bikwaphi is accused of practising witchcraft by her sisters (husband's wives) which results in the death of Lahlophe the junior's baby and the arrest of Sikhova in Johannesburg. After serving a jail sentence Sikhova returns home only to find his wife Bikwaphi expelled. He so respects his father that he cannot call Bikwaphi back inspite of the latter's plea and decides to go back to Johannesburg. The plot is successfully handled. The sub-plot fits well into the play - Sikhova's experiences in Johannesburg. The characters are well depicted.

3.21 One of the finest works in Xhosa plays is L; N; MBULAWA's MANFENE which appeared in 1962. His characters are well depicted, Jezula the main character and his wife Noqinile who are great conspirators and Kheswa a brave but steady man.

The author being a minister of religion depicts the intrigue that takes place when a minister is unwillingly transferred from one circuit to another. He does not bore the reader with prayers as one would expect, but he handles his plot with wonderful dexterity.

Kheswa, the minister who is coming to take Jezula's post is faced with great opposition from his congregation but he is amazingly sober in handling the situation. The author always saves Kheswa from dangerous situations so that the book should have a happy ending e.g. when Noqinile prepares poison for the minister and his wife Nobantu but the poison is taken by their son Thobi who is saved by Nobantu's first aid. Secondly, when Jezula and his followers try to burn Kheswa's house they are the people who suffer. The author has good humour which makes the reader to treat a serious situation lighter. e.g. when Jezula is caught trying to burn Kheswa's house wearing a woman's attire in disguise in Indima 4. Umboniso 10 and also when Matilda, Noqinile and her children ask help from Nduna after their house has been burnt down Indima 4, Umboniso 9 p.125 and 126.

The language is good in that it suites the character of the speaker. The book has a happy ending in that the good triumphs over evil.

Jezula after serving a jail sentence repents and applies for reinstatement as a minister while his family is reconciled except Matilda, his mother, who feels unwanted by her sons.

3.22 W.K. TAMSANQA wrote BUZANI KUBAWO a love tragedy that appeared in 1958. The play deals with the serious consequences of a forced marriage. Zwilakhe is a stubborn father who wants his son Gugulethu to marry Thobeka who is his (father's) choice. In primitive society the father makes the choice for his son. Unfortunately Zwilakhe does not realise that with the march of times things have changed. Gugulethu is in love with Nomampondomise but is forced to marry Tobeka. Nomampondomise commits suicide on reading about Gugulethu's wedding after suing him for a breach of promise. Thobeka on the instruction of his father-in-law goes to Umtata to see Gugulethu. Gugulethu murders all of them. One wonders why Gugulethu kills Thobeka and her children because he has never associated himself with her as he never signed the marriage register. ~~He~~ recognises Nomampondomise as his real wife and mourns for her death. This is a good attempt at play writing.

3.23 L.K. SIWISA wrote IMIDLALO YOKULINGANISWA which are already arranged for the stage. He deals with everyday happenings including the unexpected arrival of a school inspector. The plays are quite humorous. Translations of Shakespeare's plays have augmented the list of Zulu and Xhosa.

B.B. MDLEDLE an ex-teacher and presently minister of Education in the Transkei has translated three of Julius Caesar's plays.

uJulius Caesar

uMacbeth

Ubusuku beshumi elinambini. He has tried his best to follow Shakespeare as closely as possible and wrote in Shakespeare's blank verse. This, however has resulted in obscuring the meaning. Julius Caesar is the best translation so far.

O. SHANGE has translated THE MERCHANT OF VENICE - UMWEBI WASE-VENISI.

#### CLASSIFICATION OF NGUNI PLAYS

4.1 According to the above exposition Nguni plays can be classified according to theme. They may be classified into four types

- i) HISTORICAL - those dealing with the history of a tribe and succession.
- ii) LOVE THEME - Those dealing with a love set up - the traditional and modern procedure in acquiring a wife. Often the parents force their children to marry according to their choice while the children want to make their own choice. This may have disastrous results.
- iii) SOCIAL THEME - dealing with the customs, beliefs and general superstitions among the Bantu including witchcraft and magic.
- iv) TRADITIONAL - dealing with Folklore.

(1) HISTORICAL

uNgodongwana by NTLOKO (Xh)  
Ukufa kukaShaka by ZONDI (Z)  
Mageba Lazihlonza by NDELU. (Z)  
Umkhonto ka Tshiwo by M.A.P. NGANI (Xh)

(2) LOVE THEME

Buzani kuBawo TAMSANQA (Xh)  
Uqomisa Mina nje uqomisa iLiba BLOSE (Z)  
uCikizwa noDike MELANGOO (Xh)  
Mauhla Iyokwendela eGodini MNCWANGO (Z)

(3) SOCIAL THEME

Inene nasi Isibhozo - MTHINGANE (Xh)  
Mamfene - MBULAWA (Xh)  
Amathunzobom - JOLOBE (Xh)  
Imfene kaDebeza neminye Imidla-  
lwana SINKO (Xh)  
uDusha - MMANGO (Xh)  
Lawilahle - MMANGO (Xh)  
Zangeninkomo - MBIDLANA (Xh)  
Kusasa Umngcwabo wakho nami MNCWANGO (Z)  
Imidlalo yokulinganiswa SIWISA (Xh)

(4) TRADITIONAL

uGubudele Namazimuzimu - NDEBELE. (Z)

FUTURE DEVELOPMENT OF NGUNI DRAMA

5.1 Nguni drama is a recent development in Bantu literature. It should be judged as part of a literature of a developing people. Drama as stated earlier implies action. The author should, therefore, keep in mind the suitability of action on the stage, keep in view the requirements of the stage and the limits imposed on him by the stage and actors. Some of our Nguni dramatists ignore this fact while others have been successful.

5.2 Character portrayal is another important aspect of drama. It should be noted that characters are not actual persons but elements of the playwrights work.



They are altogether created and fully controlled by him and by the requirements of his artistic purpose. They are simply the agents in the drama. However, they should be representative of real people for the actors are real people. The Nguni dramatists have made a great effort in creating characters like Jezula in Mamfene although he is exaggerated for effect and for humour and Hilwayo and Zenzile in NGENZENI, Bikwaphi in INHLIZIYO NGUMTHAKATHI only to mention a few. Mmango has not been successful in his characterisation. Hudson<sup>1</sup> says about characterisation,

"It is sometimes assumed that since the play on the stage is full of action characterisation is not important--- it is the really fundamental and lasting element in the greatness of any dramatic work. What keeps Shakespeare's plays alive is not only his plot but the characters in them."

Thus in a play every word in a dialogue should be made to tell, each feature must be elaborated in strict relevancy to the whole and all mere supererogatory talk must be avoided. Every character, as a rule, should be so presented as to appear absolutely adequate to all the demands which the plot makes upon it. The characteristics of the hero or of any important personage should be made prominent and should be unmistakable. Characters are thus known by what they do, action, and say - dialogue.

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1. Hudson; An introduction to the study of Literature p.247.

However the Nguni dramatists are making a good effort in characterisation and depict certain characters as they are known in their society.

KITTO says"

The real meaning of drama is the total impact which it makes on the senses and the spirit and mind of the audience."

Shakespeare has succeeded in characterisation by using the psychological aspect and the atmosphere becomes tenser as the plot develops towards the climax.

TAMSANQA in BUZANI KUBAWO has tried to create a tense atmosphere when Gubulethu refuses to sign the marriage register. (Induna ye - 4 Umboniso wo - 1).

It seems as if the Nguni drama (Zulu + Xhosa) has taken wide strides in development. Before 1950 this was the most retarded section of Nguni literature. From 1950 to date there is a good number of Nguni plays which has been published, some are still under publication.

It is interesting to note that the percentage of the reading Nguni public is becoming higher every day with the general improvement in literacy. There is an urgent demand for literature of a higher standard. The authors association is doing good work in giving guidance to Bantu authors and in the near future the literature of the Bantu will compare favourably with any other literature. We cannot run away from the western influence on the Bantu both in culture and literature. The culture interaction is quite evident in Bantu literature which results in a unique production.

The Nguni have a wide variety of themes which reflect their way of life; including purely traditional themes.

Though the latter are very simple and sometimes meant for children they can be made very interesting on the stage to suit all ages. The people become more interested to see and read about what they know and apply it to real life situations.

The dramatic societies in the cities of the Republic instil interest among the Bantu by presenting some of the plays in Xhosa. e.g. The Port Elizabeth Dramatic Society has presented Jordan's INGQUMBO YEMINYANYA and Tamsanqa's BUZANI KUBAWO. The tendency among these societies is to stage a play in English mixed with Fanakalo Nguni to attract both white and black audience, e.g. XAPA GOES TO TOWN staged by the East London Bantu Dramatic Society. These usually deal with a countryman who goes to a big city for the first time.

The Radio Bantu Stations of the S.A.B.C. have a large collection of unpublished Radio plays both in Zulu and Xhosa.

XHOSA. Umakoti by Morris QALASE  
uDeliwe Translated from Zulu by T. MCINGA  
uFikizolo by Dambile TUSWA.

Sometimes they read the existing books for those who cannot read and write. This will encourage the Bantu to write more books and improve on those already published. With the development of mother tongue instruction the people are becoming conscious of their language and can only preserve it in their literature.

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