

The transmission and reproduction of folktales with special reference to Nanana Bosele

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### Abstract

The genre 'folktales' is one of the oldest forms of oral tradition which amongst other things, was used to impart and store knowledge from generation to generation. It is very important and is regarded as the wealth and the treasure chest of the nation. Different types of research have been done on folktales but surprisingly, many scholars seem to have ignored the subject of how they are disseminated. A tale when passed on from one individual to another, from one community to another, from one generation to the next, undergoes some form of metamorphosis. As each person repeats the story as s/he imagines or recalls what s/he has heard from the previous narrator, 'it undergoes many successive changes before it, at length, arrives at that relatively fixed form at which it may become current throughout a whole community' Bartlett (1965:247). The aim of this article is to examine three versions of the same story in order to reveal how, over decades, a story can be transmitted, altered, augmented and retold by different performers/authors. The discussion will commence with the most original one, followed by the intermediate and end with the latest version of the story.

### 1. Introduction

Oral tradition or folklore in Zulu is called *ubuciko bomlomo* which literally means oral art. African oral art has been in existence since time immemorial and has been given to us by word of mouth by our ancestors. It may include folksongs, folktales, proverbs, customs, etc. Taylor (2000:4) defines folktales as 'a traditional story that has been passed on by word of mouth – told from parent to child over generations or passed on by countless storytellers sitting around countless evening fires'. These oral traditions represent the earliest history of literature in Africa. An effort to determine the age of this art has proved to be an insurmountable undertaking mainly because our forefathers were illiterate. Ntuli and Swanepoel (1993:8) give the following reason for this: 'the age of oral art in Southern African people is difficult to determine, mainly because of a lack of appropriate and accurate records'.

Folktales form a larger part of African folklore and are an essential genre of African oral literature. They are one of the most ancient forms of African literature that originated from the spoken word and were transmitted orally by our predecessors before they were recorded and written in text form by missionaries. If we want to understand the life and origin of tradition, including its development and transmission, we need to consider the different types of bearers (Sydow 1977:12). These bearers are distinguished into active and passive bearers:

Among these it is the active bearers who keep the tradition alive and transmit it, whereas the passive bearers have indeed heard of what a certain tradition contains, and may, perhaps, when questioned, recollect part of it, but do nothing themselves to spread it or keep it alive (Sydow 1977:12-13).

Concerning Sydow's assertion, traditionally the grandmother as a performer may be considered as the active bearer. This is so because she is one of the people who is mainly responsible for introducing her audience to and educating them about the value system of their society. She uses folktales as a powerful and effective tool to entertain and teach people, especially children, on how to conduct themselves in life. Some of the audience or participants, who listen to the grandmother's story, would later on in life retell the inherited story to the same or different audience. These types of new performers will then be regarded as active bearers. However, those who will be inactive and refrain from orally passing on the custom received from home will, as a result, be regarded as passive bearers.

Folktales became a communal possession, and even though the identity of the authors of some tales could be traced, these names were slowly obscured by the absence of what people today call individual rights of copyright. The tale could expand with tribal or local variation, but the plot itself could not be mistaken (Vilakazi 1945:191). From this, it can be seen that the origin of traditional tales cannot be attributed to any particular person.

The aim of this article is to examine three versions of the same folktale in order to show how a story can be retold, transmitted and reproduced by different performers and/or authors. The story is about a brave woman called Nanana. The discussion will commence with the most original one, followed by the intermediate and end with the latest version of the story.

## 2. Story summary

Nanana kaSelesele had built her house on the path where all the animals passed. She sometimes left her children alone to go and fetch firewood. Every time when the different animals passed near Nanana kaSelesele's house, they would always ask her children the same question: 'Whose are these pretty children?' The children would always respond: 'We are the children of Nanana of Selesele who built on the path on purpose, because she relied on her cunning'. Then one day a huge elephant came and swallowed the children. When Nanana kaSelesele arrived the children were nowhere to be found. She asked some small animals about her children's whereabouts and the animals told her that they had been devoured by the elephant. Nanana went out in search of her missing children. Along the way she met different types of animals and asked them about the elephant and all of them gave her the same answer: 'It is far away, at the elephant's lakes, where it rains in drizzle'. Although Nanana was not gifted in strength, she used simple 'weapons' and her cunningness to kill the large elephant. The story has a happy ending because Nanana kaSelesele conquers the elephant and sets her children free - together with all the people and livestock that had been swallowed by the huge elephant.

### 2.1. A brief comment on the story

This story about Nanana has been performed and reproduced in written form by various storytellers as it is passed down from one generation to the next. It is for this reason that Msimang (1986:138) highlights the fact that:

the tales that a child hears as a member of an audience are the same tales that her grandmother listened to as a child; they are likewise the same stories that this child will perform before her grandchildren in her old age. New ones may be created - it is true - but the old ones will always be handed down from generation to generation *ad infinitum*.

Msimang's assertion will emerge in the discussion of the stories. A tale, when passed on from one individual to another, from one community to another, from one generation to the next, undergoes some form of metamorphosis. As each person repeats the story as they imagine or recall what they heard from the previous narrator, 'it undergoes many successive changes before it, at length, arrives at that relatively fixed form at which it may become current throughout a whole community' (Bartlett 1965:247). This means that when narrator A tells a story to B, B will unintentionally or intentionally alter or add slight changes to the story, for example by adding a type of an animal that B is familiar with. For instance, horses are not indigenous to the Zulus and they thus do not seem to feature in primitive traditional oral folktales. On the other hand, they could possibly be expected in Sesotho tales as they seem to be part and parcel of the Basotho. According to Bartlett (1965:248), the slight changes in the story may also occur by perhaps replacing an object which the narrator has rarely or never seen with some other objects with which they are familiar.

It should be noted that before Callaway's version was rendered in print form, it was originally performed by a performer called Lydia (*Umkasethemba*) (Sethemba's wife). Lydia, the woman whose surname has not been included but who has been further defined by adding her husband's name in brackets, is the person who narrated the story before an audience while Callaway recorded it. Lydia's original performance could, thus, be perceived as an example of the authentic indigenous oral Zulu narrative that she either composed or that had been verbally passed on to her by her forebearers during the pre-colonial period.

Canonici (1996:5) refers to the capacity of the human being's brain to remember, to retain and to store traditional oral literature and pass it on from one generation to the next as 'collective memories' and he explains it as follows:

Oral literature gives expression to the collective memories of a group, amassed over a long period of time, and reflecting the ways people have come to think about themselves, their life, their religious beliefs. Being stored in the memory, it needs ways to shelve it properly and to bring it back to the surface: retention and recall skills.

Lydia's story was then probably transcribed by Callaway and later translated into English and, as a result, was transmitted to a different audience for various purposes. Because Callaway's version of the tale draws from Lydia's oral narration, his written version is representative of the colonial period and might not necessarily be a true reflection of the original tale. On the other hand, Lamula's version seems to have been borrowed and reproduced from what we today, sadly, refer to as Callaway's collection or version. However, when one reads Ntuli's version, it becomes apparent that Ntuli used both tales by Callaway and Lamula to create and tell her own newly-adapted version of the story. Ntuli

and Lamula's tales represent tales narrated in the post-colonial period. When echoing Jabb's (2011:90) comments about modern Tibetan literature, Nanana's tale could thus be said to have the same parallels with Tibetan's literature because like it, it draws 'our attention to the works of traditional Tibetan scholars which display literary continuity as well as innovative qualities that have undoubtedly contributed to the development of modern Tibetan literature'. The discussion that follows will focus on story titles, introductions, the development of the stories, and endings.

Although another version of the tale entitled, *Nana Bosele* by James Stuart exists, the deliberation in this discussion examines only three versions by Callaway (1868), Lamula (1963) and Ntuli (2005). The comparative discussion provides examples of some changes that have been effected on the three versions of the same tale, for instance, alterations, omissions and additions will be commented upon. Possible reasons for the different reproductions of the same story by different authors during different eras are highlighted.

### 3. Story titles

Callaway's recorded version of the story, being the earliest, is entitled *uNanana Bosele*. Lamula and Ntuli's titles are *uNanana kaSelesele* and *uNanana*, respectively. The word *Bosele* is derived from the word *isele* (toad/frog), which has been used to refer to the main character's determined and obstinate nature of being stubborn like a toad. *Bo-* as the plural formative, alludes to her as the one who belongs to *Bosele* (toads/frogs), i.e. those who are known for their stubbornness. *Bosele* has been used in Callaway's version as the woman's surname.

Lamula has retained the main character's original name but has altered the surname slightly to make more sense. He has changed it to be in line with the Zulu custom of introducing someone or informing others about a person's background. From the surname *kaSelesele* one can also infer that Nanana was from a family of people who were as stubborn as *amaselesele* (toads). Thus '*kaSelesele*' would be referring to Nanana's surname, indicating that she is the daughter of *Selesele*. This clearly shows that when he rewrote this story, Lamula wanted to give a true reflection of the Zulu culture when it came to giving people praises according to their characteristics. Unlike her counterparts, Ntuli chose to keep Nanana's name and discard the surname, probably to avoid portraying a character by her name and preferring to portray her by her actions. Nonetheless, since the story was reproduced in the new era of a liberated South Africa, this could have been done deliberately to allow Nanana to represent so-called single and free women.

#### 3.1. Introductions

All three versions of the story begin with the opening formula '*Kwakukhona*'/*kwesukela* (once upon a time) to set the story in the remote past and introduce the main character. The introduction captures the children's attention and transfers them into a remote world of imagination with a different milieu, where they suddenly find themselves in a place

where animals can talk. However, Lamula's introduction is slightly different because it is preceded by background information about Nanana:

*UNanana-lo uqondwa njengomuntu okwakungowesifazane, ehlakaniphile njengalona othiwa nguChakijana. Nansi-ke inganekwane elandwa ngoNanana* (Lamula 1963:150).

(Nanana is understood to be a female person who was as intelligent as the one called Chakijana [Chakijana or Chakide is a male trickster in Zulu folktales]. The following folktale is about Nanana.)

In Callaway and Ntuli's tales, Nanana is introduced as the main character:

*Kwakukhona umfazi owayenabantwana ababili abancane...* (Callaway 1868:331).

(Once upon a time, there was a woman who had two small children ...)

*Kwakukhona inkosikazi ogama layo kwakunguNanana* (Ntuli 2005:9).

(Once upon a time there was a woman whose name was Nanana.)

In Lamula's version the hungry elephant appears first in the story. In the introduction of the story, Callaway and Ntuli have provided reasons for Nanana's absence while Lamula seems to have overlooked this important explanation. Callaway mentions that Nanana had gone to fetch firewood while Ntuli mentions that she was away in search for food for her children. The reasons are acceptable and convincing because they reflect the different eras and settings. Additionally, in the first two versions Nanana's husband is not mentioned. In the third reproduction of the story the reader is informed that Nanana had a husband who went hunting and never came back. The reader or listener is further told of the reason why she had to live alone, far from other people. In this folktale changes, augmentations and a number of new additions are found.

#### 3.2. The development of the stories

During Nanana's absence different types of animals come and all of them ask the children the same question and get the same answer. All three authors have used different types of animals, respectively: Callaway, a baboon, antelope and the large elephant; Lamula, a buffalo, an antelope, a white rhinoceros and the large elephant; Ntuli, an antelope, buffaloes, monkeys and the large elephant. In Callaway and Ntuli's version, it is further noticed that Nanana does not immediately go searching for her children when she finds out that they have been swallowed by the elephant. She waits until the following morning. Lamula, on the other hand, allows his main character to immediately pursue the elephant. This is seen in the following stage of the development of the story's plot where Nanana is seen preparing herself to go in search of the notorious elephant. She takes the following objects or weapons in pursuit of the elephant;

- Callaway's version

*Balala. Kwathi kusasa wagaya umcaba omningi, wathela okhambeni olukhulu kanye namasi, wahamba ephethe nomkhonto wakhe. (Callaway 1868:333).*

(They slept. In the morning she ground maize, and put it into a large pot with amasi, and set out, carrying a knife in her hand.)

- Lamula's version

*Kuthe ekushoneni kwelanga wafika uNanana... Wangena endlini, wabophela, wabophela emzimbeni iziphuku zakhe nezimbiza, nezinkuni, nembazo, nommese, nomlilo, zasuka, wazilandela izindlovu. (Lamula 1963:151).*

(Nanana arrived at sunset ... She went into the house and tied blankets, pots, firewood, an axe, a knife and matches around her body.)

- Ntuli's version

*Kuthe ekushoneni kwelanga wafika uNanana ... Wangena endlini, wabophela, wabophela, emzimbeni imbiza, izinkuni, ummese nomentshisi. (Ntuli 2005: 9-10).*

(She went into the house and tied a pot, firewood, a knife and matches to her body.)

Callaway's version tells us that as she was preparing herself to confront the elephant. Nanana took the following objects: maize, a large pot with *amasi* (curdled milk) and a knife. The Zulu version says that she took *umkhonto* (a short spear) but unfortunately, this has been translated as a 'knife'. All the weapons used in this version are in keeping with the weapons which could have been used during that era. However, it is amazing to note that Callaway chose to use the word 'knife' instead of 'spear'. This substitution could be attributed to the following explanation given by Bartlett (1965:248):

It often happens that a folk story which has been developed in a certain social group gets passed on to another which possesses different habits of life and thought, different social institutions, customs, beliefs, and belongs to a widely divergent level of development. Thereupon A, repeating the story to B, involuntarily introduces slight changes, perhaps replacing the name of an object which he has rarely or never seen by that of some other object with which he is familiar.

Furthermore, the similarities and the omissions of some objects in Lamula and Ntuli's tales tells us something about the reproduction of the story. As an ordinary person, it is difficult to imagine a woman with a number of blankets and big pots tied around her body and this could be the reason why the blankets and pots were reduced. Anything is possible and credible in the world of folktales!

In Ntuli's version, it is also noted that new information was added. Before Nanana could leave her house, she performed a ritual. She summoned the spirits of her ancestors to guide and go with her:

*'Ee - nina bakoMavuth' umlilo,  
Nina enaphuma nesikhuni emanzini,  
Sengiyaphuma manje, ngicela nihambe nami.'  
(Ntuli 2005:10).*

(Ee - you of the Mavuth' umlilo clan,  
Wise ones, you who were able to come out  
Of the water with a burning stick.  
I am about to leave now, please be with me.)

The use of the ritual is not only innovative but it also reflects the culture of Zulu society. Additionally, it informs the reader or the listener about the type of people to whom Nanana belonged. When Nanana's clan becomes angry, they become like fire and are so cunning that they are even able to supernaturally survive any type of danger; they are able to come out of the water with a burning stick. Furthermore, Ntuli has added a new song in the story - a song that requests other animals to help her by accompanying her in her quest to search for her missing children:

*Ngizohamba nobani, ngizohamba nobani?  
Ngizohamba nobani, hamba nobani?  
(Ntuli 2005:11).*

(Who will come along with me?  
Who will come along with me?)

The song did not yield any results when sung to the monkeys because one of the monkeys attempted to discourage and ridicule her when it said: 'Be careful, oh mighty one, lest the elephant swallows you!'

However, the scornful words made Nanana, who is as stubborn as a frog, be more determined because she 'promised herself that she would not be discouraged by their silly monkey tricks and continued on her journey'. The possible reason of the addition of the song in Ntuli's version could be that Ntuli is highlighting the important role music plays in Zulu society. It is a part and parcel of their social life and, thus, since folktales are a representation of the peoples way of life, Ntuli includes the song. Furthermore, this she could have done to underscore the possible omission of song in the tale when it was first transcribed and transmitted by Callaway. Okpewho's following observations seem to concur:

... it has been found that the earlier collections of African oral literature were not properly made. Many traditional tales were, and still are, told with musical accompaniment. But

collectors of these tales...often discard the musical and other backgrounds of performance and set down the bare texts of the tales and indeed sometimes contented themselves with rough summaries of their plots; surely a differentiation based on such improper methods of representation has little justification (1992:120).

The methods of such misrepresentations could have been caused, amongst other things, by the fact that the missionaries were, among many possible reasons, not well conversant with the indigenous languages, did not understand the people's culture, were ignorant about their songs, metaphors and symbols found in oral narratives that were artistically interwoven into the performance of the African folktales.

Also, in Callaway and Lamula's versions, all the different animals that she questions about her children keep on giving her different responses.

- Example from Callaway:

*Wafika lapho kukhona impunzi; wathi, 'Mama, mama ngibonisele indlovu edle abantabami iluphondo lunye.' Yathi impunzi, 'Uyakuhamba ufike lapho imithi yakhona imide, nalapho amagcaki akhona emhlophe' (1868:333).*

(She came to the place where there was an antelope, she said: 'Mother, mother, point out for me the elephant which has eaten my children'. The antelope replied, 'You will go till you come to a place where the trees are very high, and where the stones are white.')

- Example from Lamula:

*Nyathi, ngitshela - ngitshela indlovu edle abantabami. Inyathi yangqabashiya imsinela, yathi: 'Ikude le, ikude le, emachibini ezindlovu, lapha lina lenze imikhemezelo' (1963:151).*

(Buffalo, please tell me - tell me which elephant ate my children. The buffalo jumped about, dancing for her, and then said: 'It is far away, it is far away, at the elephants' lakes, where it rains in drizzle.)

As it can be seen, Lamula's version is slightly different and interesting because it also allows the audience to see the performer's mimicry, as she portrays the buffalo's actions.

On the other hand, in Ntuli's version the responses are varied and the animals give typical excuses that could be given by human beings. The antelope said, 'I am sorry I can't help you today. I also have to go and check on my children. I'll follow you later on' (2005: 15). One of the buffaloes replied, 'We are very sorry, we are at a meeting now, go and we will follow you later on' (2005:16). The older monkey remarked, 'Oh no, we are scared of that elephant, he is too big and strong for us' (2005:16).

Hence, Ntuli's version highlights the role and relevance of folktales in society, that is, the link that exists between the present and the past.

### 3.3. The endings

All three stories have a happy ending. Nanana's children and everything that was inside the elephant's belly are set free. However, Callaway and Ntuli's conclusions of the tales are slightly different and longer than Lamula's.

- Callaway's:

*Wayidabula ngomkhonto, egenca izimbambo ngembazo. Kwaphuma inkomo, yathi, 'Mu, mu, sazesalibona ilizwe.' Kwaphuma imbuzi yathi, 'Me, me, sazesalibona ilizwe.' Kwaphumainja, yathi, 'Sazesalibona ilizwe.' Nabantu baphuma behleka bethi, 'Sazesalibona izwe.' Bamupha lowo mfazi; abanye inkomo, abanye nezimbuzi, abanye nezimvu. Wahamba nabantabakhe, efuyile kakhulu (Callaway 1868:335).*

(The woman divided the elephant with a knife, cutting through a rib an axe. A cow came out and said, 'Moo, moo we at length see the country'. A goat came out and said, 'Mey, mey, at length we see the country'. A dog came out and said, 'At least we see the country'. And the people came out laughing and saying, 'At least we see the country.' They made the woman presents; some gave her cattle, some goats, and some sheep. She set out with her children being rich.

- Lamula's:

*Nango-ke uNanana eseyisika eyibhoboza, ephuma nabantabakhe, nakho konke ebekuphakathi. Wabuya-ke nemihlambi yezinkomo, nezimvu, nezimbuzi (Lamula 1963:153).*

(Nanana cut through the elephant, she came out with her children and everything that was inside. She returned with a herd of cattle, sheep, and goats.)

As with his introduction, in his conclusion of the tale Lamula digresses and adds the following unnecessary comment:

*Le nganekwane icisho ihlangane nekaJona, owagingwa umkhomo (1963: 153).*

(This folktale is almost related to the story about Jona who was swallowed by a whale.)

- Ntuli's:

In Ntuli's version, Nanana is congratulated by the old lady who was also saved from the elephant. She showers her with praises and even suggests that she be made their ruler. Nanana's husband, who had disappeared and who was also found in the elephant's stomach, promises her his support and encourages her to take the throne. The story has a happy ending, reminiscent of the time when South Africa was liberated from the apartheid regime. The author writes:

*Abantu bahleka, bashaya izandla! UNanana wezwa efikelwa enkulu injabulo. Kwehla izinyembezi zilandelwa ukumomotheka. Wayesephefumulela phezulu wathi, 'Ngiyabonga!*

*Ngibonga ngiyangcongcoza!* Wabuka umyeni wakhe, wamanga. Laphinda ihlombe kwezwakala nobutshovitsho sekushaywa ikhwelo. Emva kwalokho bonke bavumelana ngazwi linye bathi, 'Yebo uNanana uyinkosi!' Bamculela iculo lenkululeko (Ntuli, 2005:13).

(People laughed and clapped hands! Nanana's heart was filled with joy. She was crying and smiling at the same time. She took a deep breath and said, "Thank you, thank you very much!" She looked at her husband and embraced him. Everyone applauded and whistled and all agreed in one voice, 'Yes, Nanana is our queen! Nanana is our queen!' They then sang a freedom song for her:

'Yes, Nanana, yes, Nanana  
There is no one like you!')

And the story ends with these words:

*Esephindela ekhaya eseyobusa isizwe sakhe, kwezwakala imihlambi yezinkomo ibhonga, izimvu nezimbuzi kuthi, 'Me-e-e!' Iqhude lakikiliga lathi, 'Kikilikigi!' Vukani madoda sekusile bo* (Ntuli, 2005:13)!

(As she returned home to rule over her people, herds of cattle bellowed, sheep and goats bleated. A cock crowed and said, 'Cock-a-doodle-doo! Wake up everybody – this is the dawn of the new day').

This third version of Nanana's story serves to confirm Canonici's (1993) observation about the grandmother, the performer or the narrator of the story: Apart from knowing the past of the people, 'she observes the social trends ... and is able to use her stories as a social commentary, giving also advice to her young charges on what to do and what to be careful about. She is thus a storehouse of culture, a bridge between yesterday and tomorrow' (1993: 51).

#### 4. Interpretation

The above discussion of the various renditions of the Nanana Bosele folktale by different narrators may prompt the listener or reader to ponder on the following question: What has influenced the transmission and reproduction of folktales? The following responses could form part of the answers.

Recycling and reproduction is part of nature and that is the reason why human beings procreate. The recreation of the old brings about the establishment of the new which will in turn produce new offspring. That is why words like 'present', 'past' and 'future' come to mind when it is mentioned that folktales have been passed on from one generation to the next. It is for this reason that one could safely say that the reproduction or recreation of folktales was influenced by man's nature to procreate and preserve. However, some stories are retold simply because the reproducer was ignorant of the fact that the tale whose performance s/he had once witnessed had already been reproduced in writing. Lastly,

transmission and reproduction of folktales could also be caused by the writer's desire to make some changes, additions, introduce his or her own style of writing and to write or compile a new book – maybe also in a different language, etc.

Callaway's written version, being the one transcribed from Lydia's oral performance, could have been driven by his curiosity and hunger to gain knowledge, insight and a motivation to do research on African oral tradition, particularly, the Zulu folktales. Seeing that these stories were also translated into English, he could also have been influenced by the monetary gain that would have resulted after the publication of the book.

Lamula's version could have been influenced by his ability to read and write and as such, it may have inspired him to test his creative skills by continuing the oral tradition by preserving Zulu folktales in print form for coming generations. Lamula, being the custodian of Zulu culture and history, might have seen some gaps in the original version and consequently, wanted to add some changes and put some facts into perspective. For instance, his version is shorter and written in the new orthography that was used during that period. Secondly, as already mentioned, Nanana's surname was aptly changed and the introduction was preceded by a short explanation about the background of the story. Other reasons could have been his desire for the folktales to be read at schools so as to inculcate a culture of reading among African children and also for research purposes. Furthermore, he might have wanted to highlight the shift, changes and the differences that could be discerned between oral performance and written text.

Ntuli's reproduction of the story was obviously influenced by Callaway and Lamula, that is, two males from different backgrounds and cultures. As a female author, Ntuli has taken the role of storytelling that was mostly reserved for women, especially *ugogo* (the grandmother). She could have rewritten the stories to add more information, new angles and variations to the tale. This can, for instance, be seen where the voice of another female, that is, the grandmother's, is heard in the story. Her version also indicates that she could have been influenced by the desire to create a 'new', fresh and individual story that would reflect the social and historical context of that period.

#### 5. Conclusion

The presentation of this article has given evidence that a story can be retold, slightly altered and reproduced differently from one generation to the next by various performers or writers. It has portrayed the importance of continuing with the revival and retelling of folktales to a new generation in order to keep the Zulu tradition alive. Lamula and Ntuli's versions of Nanana Bosele's folktale have proven that these two narrators are indeed active bearers who have kept the tradition alive by transmitting it. This they had done by reproducing their tales for different generations by adding characters and/or objects belonging to that specific era.

For instance, this is observed in Ntuli's version of the story where new characters were included in the story, particularly, Nanana's husband. This addition is a true reflection of

people's way of life because a family consists of a husband, wife and children. The other two tales do not mention the men at all. This can make the reader or listener come to at least two conclusions. Firstly, Lamula could have unwittingly used the characters as they were portrayed by Callaway and as a result forgot about giving reasons for their absence. Secondly, this could be ascribed to Okpewho's (1992: 120) comment about the collectors' improper methods of representation who often discarded other backgrounds of performance and wrote down the bare texts of the tales and sometimes satisfied themselves with rough summaries of their plots.

The above comments bear witness to the fact that all stories change and that the audience change as well. The change may be brought about by time/period, addition of a few details to the 'new' tale, the reduction or addition of new characters, replacement of old objects with contemporary ones, etc. This further demonstrates that the folktale performers bring about changes in narration by adapting to change in communities, values and a way of thinking. All these facts underscore the fact that the transmission and reproduction of folktales is an imperative that makes folktales to be relevant to different societies.

Additionally the whole discussion becomes clear when one reads the following excerpt from the notes that were taken in a class by Canonici, from a lecture that was presented by Heda Jason (1985:36): The notes supply the following vital information about various interpretations on oral literature:

Oral literature is a survival, in that it grew together with its society in an uneven historical process ... and it bears all the marks of its own past. It is a kind of reflection of its contemporary society in that it is fitted to express these problems of it, be these social, psychological, or others. It may be used as a serious ritual, central to the society's survival ... Above all these, the item of oral literature is a work of art - a work of artistic presentation - and as such can be handled by the methods of literary criticism.

The above quote also attests that the different versions of Nanana's story as an oral narrative 'evinces an intricate interaction between past and present resulting in literary innovations' (Jabb 2011:93).

Finally, the wise words that were uttered by Naomi Shitemi at the International Southern African Folklore Society conference that was held in South Africa from 27-29 September 2010 will be reiterated. She said that the time has come for the researchers to 'unfreeze' oral traditions and that scholars should make sure that they remain relevant and are 'not just frozen in the past'. She emphasised that there ought to be a shift from orality to visual literacy. In support of Shitemi's statement, it is suggested that besides transmitting folktales mainly in oral and print mode, they should also be rewritten and reproduced in the contemporary form of writing children's literature. They should be converted into picture storybooks written in the indigenous African languages.

## 6. References

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