

Kanzanise Empimba za Nzima Atarikimanya Akangaya: The Story of Play-beans in Promoting Peaceful Co-existence*

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Afrikan narratives such as folktales, proverbs and taboos were clear systems and structures on which societies operated. These were used to guide society's values that promoted trust, accountability, self respect and many more for the wellbeing of the entire community. This paper discusses one of the Banyankole folktale *Kanzanise empimba za Nzima atarikimanya akangaya* (Let me stand in the gap of my sister (Nzima) while she is away or else, I will be shamed in case she knows I did not). The purpose of the paper is to demonstrate how Afrikan indigenous knowledge and specifically this folktale *Kanzanise empimba za Nzima atarikimanya akangaya* inculcated in the community a spirit of care, commitment to one another and transparency which are fundamental values that create peaceful societies. The paper argues that there is a wealth of wisdom residing in the African cultures to be exploited to guide African policy development. This will raise African indigenous knowledge to a platform worth recognition for its contribution towards positive transformation. Furthermore, that the Western systems and structures currently guiding Afrikan policy development are oblivious of the richness of *Afrikan* indigenous knowledge that united the people. The paper concludes that for Afrikans to contribute to the global agenda, they need to bring to the table of globalization a unique product such as the *Afrikan* indigenous narratives that contributes to world peace. The paper recommends moving back into our past, identify and promote those unique *Afrikan* values that sustained Africa before the Western influence.

Keywords: Afrikan narratives, folktale co-existence, sustainable development insights

Introduction

Folktales, proverbs and taboos were part of several Afrikan narratives that formed clear systems and structures on which societies operated. These were Afrikan strength-based practices used to guide society's values that promoted inclusiveness, friendship, respect and posterity hence promoting peaceful co-existence (Mutungi, Mutungi & Fuentes, 2016). This paper looks at the folktale of two step sisters who loved each other but one of them was thrown away by her step mother. The favored sister insisted on finding her sister until she was

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rescued bringing out the attributes of peaceful co-existence. To understand the story, I will first contextualize the use of Afrika as opposed to Africa that I have used to explain the story in this chapter.

Contextualizing Afrika as Opposed to Africa in the Present Story

Letter “K” in Afrika represents an acknowledgment that ‘Africa’ is not the true name of that vast continent. Madhubuti (1994) argues that Africans used the letter “K” in their words until Europeans “polluted” the spelling by switching the “K” to a “C” during the attempted colonization of the African continent. Madhubuti argues that the spelling change represents cultural subordination which needs to be offset. Reverting to the “K” spelling empowers people of Afrika to have a common identity.

Buntu (2013) similarly argues that Africa is in crises in many aspects such as political, economic and philosophical aspects because the worldview has relegated Africa’s self-determination which needs repositioning and deconstructing. Replacing letter “K” with “C” is one of the examples of how the western ideologies unintentionally changed the landscape in Africa to meet some of their interests. Consequently, the Network of Designers in Africa has also adopted the use of letter “K” hence Network of Afrikan Designers (NAD) and Pan Afrikan Design Institute (PADI). I like the idea of using letter “K” in this paper apart from where the word Africa is referring to the present continent because it is going back to our roots without losing any value and coming to the future with a common identity. This paper therefore, will adopt the use of the letter “K” to promote the use of our traditional values and strengths to approach the future (globalization) with resilience and optimism of a strong and united Africa.

Methodology

The paper adopted a narrative approach so as to develop an in-depth understanding of the meaning of the African folktales as contained in the participants’ stories (Bleakley, 2005; Elci & Devran, 2014). Jovchelovitch and Bauer (2000) argue that Narrative Inquiry (NI) interview method helps to minimize interviewer’s influence by avoiding pre-structured questions, enabling the informant to enlist his or her perspectives without any bias. This paper therefore captured the story from a celebrated cultural promoter who has kept talking, singing and dressing in a cultural style despite being a high ranking personality in Ugandan politics and security. The data was collected through a recording of the folktale as told by the respondent. Data was transcribed sent back to him to ascertain its authenticity and secure his consent. Once that was achieved, data was analyzed using content analysis to understand the emerging issues in regard to inclusiveness, accountability, friendship, respect, and posterity.

The Story of the Play-beans

In the story of the play-beans, there were two girls of the same father but of different mothers who used to assemble play-beans as herds of cattle. The mother of one girl was the favourite wife of the father and the mother of the other girl had separated with the father. The one without a mother at home was called Nzima and the one with a mother was called Njunju. The two sisters were so close and played together all the time. One of their favorite games was *empimba* (the play-beans). *Empimba* are a collection of beans with different colours. Each child would collect play-beans and keep them as a herd of cattle. They would then assemble them as cattle resting

(*okujangiza*) or make them into a line as cattle going to the water source (*okutsyoora*). This was their favorite game which they played both at home and in field while looking after calves. The step mother did not like her step daughter because she seemed more gifted than hers. She therefore decided to throw her away and let her daughter grow without a competitor. She tied her up, put her in a basket and hid her in a tree in the middle of a swamp to starve her to death. When Nzima went missing, Njunju was so disturbed and became lonely. Despite the step mother's hatred towards Nzima, she was Njunju's best friend because they did everything together. They played with their play-beans at home and while attending to the calves. They shared clothes; they slept on the same bed as young people and supported each other in everything. The disappearance of Nzima negatively affected Njunju because she had lost a friend. She then started talking and singing about her sister in everything she was doing. She kept singing to herself as she would see what her sister left behind. She started with her play-beans which they used to play together, every time she would look at her clothes, every time she would look at her stick, every time she would look at her empty place, she would go and sit in that place where her sister used to sit and would sing as follows:

Kanzanise empimba za nzima atarikimanya akangaya, reka nzanise empimba za nzima
atarikimanya akangaya,
Kashitame omumwanya gw'nzima atarikimanya akangaya,
Kankwate enkoni ya'nzima atarikimanya akangaya, reka nkware enkoniya'nzima atarikimanya akangaya,
Kanjwaare omwenda gwa'nzima atarikimanya akangaya, reka njwaare omwenda gwa'nzima
atarikimanya akangaya

Let me play with Nzima's play-beans just in case she knows, she will know that I stood
in her gap and I will never be ashamed,
Let me sit in Nzima's place in case she knows, she will know that I stood in her gap,
Let me hold Nzima's stick just in case she knows, she will know that I still hold her stick,
Let me put on Nzima's clothes just in case she knows, or when she comes to know
She will know that I stood in her gap and I will never be ashamed.

Njunju did not stop at singing at home only but she continued singing holding both her playbeans and Nzima's as she attended to the calves. As she continued singing each day in the bush while looking after the calves, she heard a voice replying her with touching but confusing words. The voice replied with the following words:

Nyanjunju, nyanjunju oyihieho etietsi, sho n'nyoko bakagamba kimwe, ngubiite Nzima barekye Njunju akure.
Nyanjunju, nyanjunju oyihieho etietsi, sho n'nyoko bakagamba kimwe, ngubiite Nzima barekye Njunju akure.

(Nyanjunju, nyanjunju do not be fooled, your father and mother connived to kill Nzima
and allow Njunju to live.
Nyanjunju, nyanjunju do not be fooled, your father and mother connived to kill Nzima
and allow Njunju to live)

Each day Njunju would sing and the same voice would reply her. She followed the voice up to the swamp but could not continue because she was young. When she went home, she told her father who was also puzzled because the wife never consulted him before throwing away Nzima. The next day the father went with Njunju to listen to the voice. As Njunju started singing, Nzima replied. The father who was hiding, heard a reply from a tree in the middle of the swamp and recognized the voice of his daughter. The father was able to go in the swamp and

get her from the tree. Although he found Nzima still alive, part of her body had developed sores because of remaining in one position where she was squeezed in the basket. The father untied her and took her home for medication.

Unpacking the Story of Play-beans in Promoting Peaceful Co-existence

Afrikan narratives such as folktale, proverbs and taboos were embedded with meaning and strengths and provided enough systems and structures on which societies operated (Mutungi, Mutungi & Fuentes, 2016). Such narratives promoted tolerance, tranquility resulting into peaceful co-existence because they were holistic and integrated in the society fabric (Yusuf & Bello, 2013). The play-bean story demonstrates how the two sisters Njunju and Nzima were engaged in a meaningful activity of playing together using their sorted beans that represented cattle. The play-bean game exposed the two girls to a positive relationship with a strong bond that even if they were of different mothers, they regarded themselves as one. This is demonstrated in the manner how Njunju responded when Nzima was hidden away by her step mother. The story further demonstrates how cultural values were great attributes in sustaining relationships. Njunju understood the value of being honest and respectful by taking care of her sister's property.

Values are an important aspect of any meaningful co-existence. The play-bean story is built on the values of the four characters—the two sisters who were blessed with a value of friendship, the mother whose values were negative and the father who rescued the daughter. Huba (2006) argues that values are compatible with a sustainable way of living that promotes the shift towards sustainable future. He further argues that values are an art of humankind and hence a core of the common heritage of mankind. Even though Nzima did not have a mother at home, she regarded her step mother as her mother. If the step mother also regarded her as her own daughter, the peaceful co-existence would have occurred.

The story of Nzima and Njunju augments the contact hypothesis by Allport (1994) that proposes how interpersonal contact between majority and minority group members can reduce prejudice and foster positive attitudes towards each other. In the story of the play-beans, Njunju was favored by the parents and the mother took advantage of it and throws away Nzima. We see this in the response of Nzima to Njunju when she replied her sister that their parents did not love her and that is why they threw her away.

However, the two sisters loved each other beyond the prejudices of their parents. Njunju and Nzima's contact was strong and favoured a positive attitude (Cameron, Rutland & Brown, 2007). It is the affection between the two sisters that eventually rescued Nzima. The way they grew up sharing and playing together, created a bond that compelled Njunju to look for Nzima. There was empathy that made Njunju unsettled when Nzima went missing because empathy is very important in connecting people of different status

Promoting Inclusiveness

Njunju's search for her sister and the response of her father when she told him of the strange voice demonstrates the need for inclusiveness. Inclusiveness is an African attribute often expressed in the concept of Ubuntu. Ramose (2002) as referenced by Shanyanana and Waghid (2016) explains that Ubuntu means, that to be human is to affirm one's humanity by recognizing the humanity of others, respect human relations, preservation of life, and that a person is a person through other persons. More so, Cornell and Muvangua (2012) and Lefa

(2015) explain that Ubuntu intertwines human beings in a world of ethical relations and obligations from the time they are born, and it is the principle of caring for each other's well-being and a spirit of mutual support. The relationship we hold with others as explained in the Ubuntu concept, is embedded and supported by each member of the community. Njunju's response to Nzima's disappearance is contained in the famous phrase *umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu* (a person is a person by or through other people). Mutungi, Mutungi and Fuentes (2016) posit that the concept of Ubuntu cuts across Afrikan cultures and is based on shared values, individual contribution, and communal goals. Sheikheldin (2015) echoes the same values in the Ujamaa concept of Julius Nyerere of 1962. In 1962, Julius Nyerere and his ruling party introduced the Ujamaa concept that was believed to be the appropriate path of development for Tanzania, It was built on three tenets of; respect whereby all individuals in the community were to be respected for their different and vital roles in the sustenance of the whole, basic goods in the community that are held in common, and that every member was expected to work and participate for wellbeing of the society. These are the values that guided Njunju to search for her sister Nzima which are important in peaceful co-existence.

Although Njunju's mother did not like Nzima, Njunju loved her and she could not settle until she found her. It is in that regard, that UN (2015) observes that peace worldwide is better achieved in more inclusive and tolerant societies. Similarly, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) 16 advocates for committee member states to promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development (UN, 2015). The story of Nzima and the Play-beans calls for tolerance and the importance of inclusiveness and co-existence. For sustainable development to happen, individuals, societies, organizations and countries need to move back into their past identify the good practices and apply them to guide the present and consequently shape the future. This paper argues that peaceful co-existence will happen fast in individuals, organizations, societies and countries where individual differences and interests are used as building blocks for success rather than road blocks. As enshrined in the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (UN, 2015), equity, tolerance, inclusiveness and respect of our diversity are the most appropriate tools to deliver sustainable development to communities.

Accountability and Peaceful Co-existence

The story of play-beans brings out the issue of accountability. Although Nzima had gone missing, Njunju kept Nzima Play-beans active. She played with them alongside hers. She never threw them away. She was mindful that one day she will account to the owner-her sister. Her main concern was her imagination that what if Nzima comes to know that she never cared about her Play-beans when she was away, she would never take her serious again. This brings in the perspective of accountability, transparency, participation and inclusion as crucial and overarching principles of development (Carothers & Brechenmacher, 2014). Accountability is a core value of transparency and hence underpins peaceful co-existence because if we are mindful and considerate of each other, we will associate with them, plan together, protect each other and develop together. Njunju was mindful not to betray her sister but to be accountable to her once she returned.

Accountability is an important factor for peaceful co-existence. Gbrevble et al. (1999) elucidate that development of any society that can enhance the living standards of its citizens can only happen if there is proper accountability. They argue that for example why many Afrikan countries have remained undeveloped or without a clear sustainable development path is lack of accountability. Whereas Nzima had been isolated by the step

mother, Njunju felt it was important to be accountable because her relationship with Nzima was not only biological, but a friendship built on common good and emotional attachments. Burns, Ikita, Franco and Shahrokh (2015) posit that when people in authority deny rights of the marginalized through the process of exclusion and discrimination, co-existence fails. Nzima was marginalized, excluded and thrown away and if it was not for her sister's effort to keep looking for her, she could have died. Njunju loved her sister so much so that she never settled down until her sister was found. On the other hand, when Junju told her father about the strange voice, he acted. The story shows a social responsivity. As individuals, we need to be ethically mindful of our neighbor's needs and concerns, because through that we mirror and re-align our culture and core values and demonstrate our friendship.

Friendship and Co-existence

The story highlights the importance of friendship. Friendship is a key factor in promoting peaceful co-existence which results in future advancement of the two parties. Friendship is more than just friendly interaction, it forms emotional ties with each other (Dworetzky, 1996) because by nature, humans are social beings and are born to be socialized with others. Nzima and Njunju were not only sisters but they were friends. They went beyond being sisters to becoming friends who played together, shared clothes and food. Treanor (2012) argue that although individuals may differ in different aspects such as chronological age or cognitive abilities, they can become friends basing on shared emotional life. This argument is premised on Aristotle's theory that categorizes humans as social by nature where friendship is an essential requirement to human life that results into realization of our potential as human beings (Cooper, 1975). Friendship as demonstrated in the story of Nzima and Njunju is what Aristotle and his proponents refer to as "living together." Living together means more than physical proximity; it is people sharing a common world of social, emotional and intellectual interests that act as a focus point for those involved and what is important in their lives (Cooper, 1975). Promoting peaceful co-existence requires a friendship where people live well; know the goodness of their life through feedback from friends and where there is friendly engagement in moral, emotional and intellectual activities. This paper argues that the story of Nzima and Njunju therefore ably elucidates these values. Njunju knew the goodness of her sister and when her sister went missing she too never settled until she found her. This would not have been the case if they were not friends enjoying a peaceful co-existence despite being of different mothers. Njunju would have felt more loved and secure because she would have remained alone at home and loved by the parents, but the friendship she enjoyed with her sister could not allow her settle when her sister friend was missing.

Vogeli and Ruci (2015) quote Mckulincer and Selinger (2001) who argues that several factors influence the friendship among the youth which we could apply to Nzima and Njunju. They point out that fear and social isolation, the need to be heard, encouragement, counseling, sharing in confidence and economical help influence friendship in young people. On the other hand, Adams and Graham (1998) talk of other contributing factors such as circumstances, society and culture we belong to and personal preferences play a big role. In the case of Nzima and Njunju, the behavior of their mother could have led to their strong bonding and deep friendship. Likewise, circumstances such as social, economic or political challenges that we go through as human beings, should create a bond with in us to emerge victorious in whichever circumstances. We should learn to accommodate one another and co-exist as human beings who are by nature social. We should never engage in activities that bring hatred,

betrayal and mistrust. We need to always move back into our past, reflect on it and then come with strategies to confront the future. Our histories should be our learning lessons for peaceful co-existence where we respect one another.

Respect and Peaceful Co-existence

The story further touches the issue of respect which is a great virtue in sustainable development. It is important to respect one another irrespective of our differences. We need to respect one another's political, social, cultural, political and even religious perspectives. If such respect is practical, then we will be promoting co-existence that will positively affect our wellbeing as people. Matsuura (2005) observes that sustainable development is a moral precept which is closely linked to peace, human rights and equity. Peace, human rights and equity can only be achieved when human beings accept to co-exist with one another hence respect. Nzima and Njunju's story is a story of respect. Respect of friendship and property. It is a story of peaceful co-existence where the marginalized- Nzima is respected, cared for and rescued.

Posterity as a Result of Co-existence

We learn from the story of Nzima and Njunju that posterity is important in promotion of co-existence that would result in sustainable development. Nzima was not looking at her advantaged situation as the only favored daughter of her parent but rather she was looking at her future life with Nzima when they are adults and friends. Even when Nzima replied Njunju reminding her that their parents planned to kill her and let Njunjulive, she was looking at the future not the present situation. The story does not tell us if Nzima and Njunju's father was annoyed with his wife and if he punished her. The story tells us that Nzima was brought back home, her wounds treated and thereafter they all lived as a happy family. This is a clear manifestation that the family focused on posterity and ignored the past. The father practice values of posterity and peacefully co-existence

Conclusion

The story of Nzima and Njunju is loaded with a great message that promotes peaceful co-existence among different sections of society. The play-beans represent a call to each one of us to be responsible, inclusive, friendly and accountable to each other. We should never compromise our values but act justly in all situations. Furthermore, we should always be ready to act for any justifiable cause and to stand in the gap for our friends, family, organization and our country. We need to remember that peaceful co-existence promotes our well being as people.

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