

Critical Appreciation: Sofola's Concept of Dual-Sex in Norbert Mutasa's Novels

by

Tyanai Charamba

Department of African Languages and Culture

Midlands State University, Zimbabwe

charambat@msu.ac.zw

Abstract

Drawing examples from the pre-colonial Igbo society, Sofola (1998) has argued that pre-colonial African societies enjoyed a dual-sex system which had roots in the philosophy of 'holistic harmony' and 'communalism' and in the principle of 'relatedness'. For Sofola, that philosophy was violated by the European thought system that has roots in the philosophy of 'individualistic isolationism'. Two of Norbert Mutasa's novels: *Nhume YaMambo* and *Misodzi Dikita Neropa* expose the nature of a dual-sex system that prevailed in the pre-colonial Shona society. As such, the novels provide an atmosphere and an environment that can aid an intellectual, who has a keen interest in the up and coming theories of African Womanhood, to question the degree to which tenets of some of those theories, which have been developed in some parts of Africa, do apply to African cultures that are separate and apart from their founding cultures and traditions. Using Mutasa's two novels, this article grapples with the extent to which Sofola's concept of a dual-sex system applies to the pre-colonial Shona culture. Generally speaking, the article debates on the applicability of some of the tenets of the theories that are originally developed in some parts of Africa to the Zimbabwean situation.

Introduction

Nnaemeka (1998: 11) notes that, Kamene Okonjo, Zulu Sofola, Flora Nwapa and Sabine Jell-Bahlsen extensively discuss "The Igbo dual-sex institutions of shared authority and power". After they extensively discuss the Igbo dual-sex system, these scholars generalize their findings on all African cultures. For instance, Sofola (1998: 53-4) says that,

The African [not simply the Igbo] perception of the gender question is thus more healthy, positive, and allows for a wholesome development of a human society. Consequently, the woman has always had a vital place in the scheme of things within the African cosmology, the most relevant to our present discussion being the dual-sex system of socio-political power sharing fully developed by African peoples and based on the following perceptions of womanhood 1) as the divine equal of a man in essence, 2) as a daughter, (3) as a mother; (4) as a wife.

In the quotation, Sofola talks about “the African perception” and not solely about “the Igbo perception”. What that means is, Sofola generalizes, what she established with reference to gender relations among the Igbo, on all African cultures. What then is at stake in this paper is unearthing, using Mutasa’s novels, the extent to which the concept of the Igbo dual-sex system can be generalized on other cultures that are practiced in other societies which are separate and apart from the Igbo one. In fact, this paper questions the extent to which qualitative generalizability can be held to be both authentic and genuine when it comes to dealing with socio-cultural matters. Maxwell (2002: 37-64) identifies five types of qualitative validity viz a viz descriptive, interpretive, theoretical, evaluative and generalizability. In order for the researcher to proceed with his epistemological quest, one of Maxwell’s categories of qualitative validity is of importance. The category is generalizability. Generalizability “refers to the extent to which one can extend the account of a particular situation or population to other persons, times or settings than those directly studied” (Maxwell, 2002: 52). The idea of generalizability is relevant in this epistemological effort since the researcher will interrogate the extent to which Sofola’s notions of a dual-sex system, which she coined after studying gender relations in Igbo culture, apply to other African cultures like the Shona of Zimbabwe. What is noteworthy is that, the idea of generalizability is closely linked to the notion of external validity. External validity connotes to the extent to which research findings arrived at in a specific setting and environment and among a specific people can be generalized “to other communities, groups or institutions” (Maxwell, 2002: 53). In fact, “the heart of external validity is replicability - would the results be reproducible in those target instances to which one intends to generalize?” (Krathwohl, quoted by Schofield, 2002: 173).

The classical view of external validity is that external generalizability or validity “is of little help to qualitative researchers” (Schofield, 2002: 177). In fact, classical theorists do not want to apply the idea of external validity to qualitative research because they hold that “it is unimportant, unachievable or both” (Schofield, 2002: 172). They consider it to be unachievable since most qualitative research focus on a single case study “which is obviously inconsistent with the requirements of statistical sampling processes which are usually seen as fundamental to generalizing from the data gathered in a study to some larger populations” (Ibid: 173).

This article establishes the extent to which proponents of African Womanhood have managed to defy the claims of the classical view of external validity when they carried research on the dual-sex system among the Igbo of Nigeria and label their findings “African” and not solely “Igbo”. At this point, it is important to talk about Norbert Mafume Mutasa and his two novels under study.

Mutasa and His Novels

Norbert Mafume Mutasa is a Zimbabwean novelist of Shona expression. He was born in 1947 in Gutu District of Zimbabwe’s Masvingo Province. He got educated in the different Zimbabwean schools. At the time of his death in the early 2000s he was the chief Executive Officer of the Tongogara District Council that is found in Zimbabwe’s Midlands Province. During his life time, he wrote five Shona novels. Including *Nhume YaMambo* (Emissary of the Mambo/Paramount chief of the Rozvi people) and *Misodzi, Dikita Neropa* (Tears, Sweat and Blood).. *Misodzi Dikita Neropa* is the continuation of *Nhume YaMambo*. So it is like Mutasa wrote a long novel and then divided it into two volumes. Volume one is *Nhume YaMambo* and Volume two is *Misodzi Dikita Neropa*. It is vital to talk briefly about each of the two volumes.

Nhume Yamambo

The title *Nhume YaMambo* is translated to Emissary of the Mambo in this article. Nhume is an emissary and Mambo and/or Changamire is the title given to the paramount chief of the Rozvi people. In *Nhume YaMambo*, Chirisamhuru is the Mambo of the Rozvi state and Tavada is the emissary of Chirisamhuru. Chirisamhuru sends Tavada to the present day Njelele Shrine, which was popularly known as Mabweaziva by then, to convince Mavhudzi, the high priest of that shrine, to support Chirisamhuru and not Dyembeu in a chieftaincy wrangle. Tavada succeeds in convincing Mavhudzi to stop supporting Dyembeu and to start supporting Chirisamhuru in that wrangle for chieftaincy. As a result of the support he gets from Mavhudzi and the Mwari cult, Chirisamhuru succeeds in defeating Dyembeu after which he is installed the Rozvi Mambo. The editor has this to say on *Nhume YaMambo*,

This, well researched piece of art is a recreation of the powerful Matopo Sacred Shrine of the Mwari Cult under its Chief Priest Mavhudzi clarifying the religion, war and politics that prevailed in Zimbabwe under the Rozvi Rulers. The story plunges the reader back into the Zimbabwe of the 18th and early 19th centuries by vividly bringing to life the sights and sounds of the mysterious, fascinating and sometimes frightening Mabweadziva Cult as it affects the Zimbabwean people and rulers of the Rozvi Kingdom. It is clearly a bold attempt at a Shona epic that blends history with myths, creating a gripping love and war story, that finally describes in amazing detail how well Tavada the nephew of the rebellious Chirisamhuru, strategically maneuvered a bloody and destructive battle-clash, that had all the wisdom, brutality and violence of war against King Dyembeu’s army. (Mutasa 1990: Cover page).

By virtue of their being “well-researched pieces of art” on Rozvi, religion, war and politics, *Nhume YaMambo* and its second volume *Misodzi dikita Neropa*, are used in this article to establish the extent to which Sofola’s concept of a dual-sex system apply to the Rozvi culture of the pre-colonial era. In the article, the Rozvi culture represents pre-colonial Shona culture

Misodzi, Dikita Neropa

In this article, the title *Misodzi Dikita Neropa* is translated to *Tears, Sweat and Blood*. The novel treats both the success and downfall of Chirisamhuru’s as Mambo of the Rozvi people. In the novel, Chirisamhuru is portrayed as a very successfully leader who, after some time, becomes corrupted by absolutist and autocratic’ methods of leadership. He castigates both Mavhudzi the high priest of the Mwari cult, and Mwari, who is the high God of the Rozvi. After he denounces, Mavhudzi, Mwari and the whole Rozvi religious cult, Chirisamhuru forcefully orders his people to build for him a new shrine which he re-names Ndarikure (A high place that can be viewed from a very far away distance and/or a high place at which the Mambo resides and becomes able to view his whole kingdom). He orders sub-chiefs and tributary chiefs to make sure their people move mountains of his choice to his place for the purpose of constructing the Ndarikure. He also orders his people to construct a ladder to the moon. He commands his people to use the ladder to bring down the moon from the skies fin order for him to satisfy his selfish goals. That ladder is what Chirisamhuru calls Nhururamwedzi (ladder for bringing down the moon After Mavhudzi and the high God (Mwari) try in vain to warn Chirisamhuru to stop his acts of bigotry, they combine to destroy him. At the end of it all, Mwari sends a foreign army to go destroy Chirisamhuru and his chiefdom.

Using the two novels by Mutasa, this article proceeds to discuss the extent to which the concept of the dual-sex system of socio-political power sharing, as Sofola understands it, apply to the pre-colonial Shona culture . Roizvi culture is used as case study. The Rozvi were a group of the Shona people who managed to build a strong state in pre-colonial Zimbabwe. Thje discussion in this article is based on only the three out of the four perceptions of a woman in African culture, which Sofola (1998: 53-4) proposes. These are: 1) A woman as the divine equal of a man in essence, 2) A woman as a daughter, and (3) a woman as a wife. Since the perception of ‘a woman as a mother’ is not prominent in Mutasa’s novels, it is left out in this discussion.

Woman: Divine Equal of A Man

In Mutasa's novels, the concept of a woman as a divine equal of man is traceable through the study of the Rozvi people's hierarchy of supremacy. The nature of that hierarchy is that it was both sacred and secular. The hierarchy as Mutasa presents it appears like this:

Mwari (The Rozvi high God)

Midzimu mikuru (Senior guardian spirits of the Rozvi state)

Midzimu midiki (junior guardian spirits of the Rozvi state)

Nevanji mukuru waMwari (The High Priest at Mabweaziva Shrine)

Mbonga (Sacred virgins), Manyusa (Rain makers) and Masvikiro (spirit mediums)

Mambo/Changamire (Rozvi paramount chief)

Makurukota aMambo nemhuri yake (Mambo's court councilors and his family members)

Mhuri dzavaRozvi (Members of the Rozvi families and clans)

Madzishe (Tributary and sub chiefs)

Makurukota nemhuri dzaMadzishe (Tributary chiefs' court councilors and family members)

Vanhu vanotongwa naMadzishe (All the subjects to the tributary chiefs)

Mwari is the Rozvi and Shona people's high God. He is associated with the present day Njelele Shrine. In Mutasa's novels the Njelele Shrine is referred to as Mwarindizimu and/or Mabweadziva. In Mutasa's novels, senior guardian spirits of the Rozvi chiefdom are the spirits of the father founders of the Rozvi state. Mutasa (1990: 31) says of them, "...dzinoti, Dziva, Tovera Murenga, Chaminuka, Tate, Dombo nedzimwe dzakawanda" (They are, Dziva, Tovera Murenga, Chaminuka, Tate, Dombo, Washaya and many others), (Mutasa, 1990: 31). In Mutasa's novels, they also include "Washaya namagamba amadzitateguru enyika ino" (Washaya and the great legendary figures among the grandfathers of this state), (Mutasa, 1990: 31). The junior guardian spirits of the Rozvi state are spirits of the Rozvi people, who would have been key and central to the growth of the Rozvi state but would not have been among the father founders of that state. They are usually ancestral spirits of the former and late Rozvi Mambos. In Mutasa's novels they include the spirit of Chirisamhuru who is grandfather to Mambo Chirisamhuru. Ndomboya is the medium for that ancestral spirit. In Mutasa's novels, the other junior guardian spirit of the Rozvi state is Chuwe Muguru who possesses Tavada. In Mutasa's novels, the high priest is Mavhudzi. As the high priest, Mavhudzi acts as the "bridge" between the guardian spirits of the Mamboland and the Mambo and his people. Mavhudzi says that,

Ndini Mavhudzi, nevanji mukuru waMwari munaisi wemvura. Ndini mutsananguri nomuturukiri wezvinobva kuvadzimu vakuru vose vanogara muno nezvose zvinonzi naMwari zvidudzirwe vanhu. Mavhuddzi ndiye zambuko rezvinobva kuvanhu zvichienda kuna Mwari. Ndichigovawo danhiko rezvinobva kuna Mwari zvichiinda kuvanhu" (I am Mavhudzi the great son of Mwari who causes the rains to fall.. I am both the interpreter and passage of what comes from the senior guardian spirits of the state who reside here at the Shrine and of all that which Mwari would want people to know and understand. I am also the go-between of what comes from the people intended for Mwari to know. Again, I am the go-between of what comes from Mwari that is intended for the people to know and understand). (Mutasa, 1990: 109).

Sacred virgins, rain makers and spirit mediums occupy a position which is more or less horizontal in the hierarchy of supremacy: Tavada says that, "Takazosvika pamaguta namamana aigara manyusa, mbonga navagari vokushandira Zame." (We arrived at some sections of the shrine where the rain makers, the sacred virgins and those people that at the service of Zame at the shrine resided), (Mutasa, 1990: 80). Sacred virgins, who are called Mbonga in Shona, are young girls who will be at the service of the high priest at the holy Shrine. They are expected to remain *virgo intacto* for the whole period they will be serving at the shrine. In the novels, Harupindi is a sacred virgin before the high priest gives her off in marriage to Mambo Chirisaamhuru. Hwerure is also a sacred virgin before she enters an illicit sexual encounter with Mwenje. The other sacred virgins are Nyikite, Masikinye and Chisvo.

The Manyusa or rain makers are the men who reside at the shrine together with the Mbonga and the other people who will be serving there. Their roles are related to rain making activities. Tavada says of them,

Paiva namanyusa makuru aiturikira zvaitaurwa nezvi raibva mumapako aishamisa aya. Pamwe tainzwa zvinotaurwa kana takonewa manyusa oturikira” (There were senior rain makers, who would interpret or pass on what would have been said by the voice that appeared to us from some sacred caves. When the ordinary people failed to grasp what the voice would have said, the rain makers would clarify it to them), (Mutasa, 1990: 80).

It becomes clear from Tavada’s words that, the Manyusa (rain makers) mediated between the sacred beings who resided at the holy shrine and the people who came to the shrine to ask for rains. Just like the Mbonga, they were to stay unmarried as long as they were serving at the shrine. In Mutasa’s novels the Manyusa include Chuwe Tavada, Chuwe Mugura, Mwenje, Mukwati and Mavhudzi. Although he is high priest, Mavhudzi refers to himself as a Nyusa.

In the novels, the reader meets spirit mediums of the likes of Ndomboya and Chuwe Tavada. From the reading of the novels, it appears that, whilst the high priest interpreted the will of the senior guardian spirits to the Mambo and the people, the spirit mediums interpreted the will of the junior guardian spirits to the chief priest, to the Mambo and to the Rozvi people in general. Ndomboya is a spirit medium of her grandfather, Chirisamhuru. The reader meets her possessed on pages 17 and 50-51 of *Nhume YaMambo*. Tavada is a spirit medium of Chuwe Mugura his father. He is possessed by him at different instances in both *Nhume YaMambo* and *Misodzi Dikita Neropa*. The position of the Mambo/Changamire came soon after that one of the rain makers, the sacred virgins and the spirit mediums. In *Nhume YaMambo* Mutasa makes reference to some three Mambos. They include the Late Gumboremvura, who is Chirisamhuru’s father, Dyembeu, who is Chirisamhuru’s brother and Chirisamhuru himself. In Pre-colonial Rozvi culture, the position of Mambo was both sacred and secular. Although it was both sacred and secular, however, that position was more secular than sacred. The Maamo would rule with the help of councilors. His councilors included his brothers and some other respected people from among the Rozvi people. In *Nhume yaMambo*, Chirisamhuru’s councilors include among many, his younger brothers Jiri and Musaka, Ndomboya his sister, Tavada his nephew, Harupindi his second wife and Harundima, who is Tavada’s wife. Therefore, members who belong to the Mambo’s immediate and extended families were held in high esteem in the Rozvi state.

Below the position of the Mambo and that of his councilors and family members in the hierarchy of supremacy were the tributary and sub chiefs. Tributary chiefs were rulers of those chiefdoms that were directly under the leadership of the Mambo. They could be people, who belonged to those respective chiefdoms, who would have been appointed by the Rozvi Mambo to rule on his behalf.

They could also be people from the Rozvi clan, who would have been appointed by the Mambo and his court councilors to go and rule over conquered territories. In the Rozvi state, the tributary chiefs also had court councilors, who were superior to the members of the general populace. Members of their immediate and extended families were also superior to the members of the general populace that make up the bulk of the population of any given chiefdom. In Mutasa's novels the reader meets tributary chiefs such as Njerere, Ndumba, Chirimuhanzu, Negove Zimuto etc. What needs to be debated on is the extent to which the hierarchy of supremacy promoted the concept of womanhood as a divine equal of a man in essence. A table needs to be drawn showing the statuses in the hierarchy from a gendered perspective.

Male	Female
Mwari/Zame/Musikavanhu/ Nyadenga	--
Senior ancestral guardian spirits – Tovera, Murenga, Dombo, Tate, Wahsaya and Dziva	--
Junior guardian spirits – Chirisamhuru and Chuwe Mugura	--
Chief Priest of the Mabweadziva cult – Mavhudzi	--
--	Sacred virgins - Harupindi, Hwerure, Nyikite, Chisvo, Masikinye and group characters
Rain makers – Mukwati, Mwenje, Mugura, Tavada, Mavhudzi and group characters	--
Spirit mediums – Tavada	Spirit mediums – Ndomboya
Paramount chief – Gumboremvura, Dyembeu and Chirisamhuru	--
Paramount chief's councilors Tavada, Musaka, Gumunyu and Jiri	Paramount chief's councilors – Ndomboya, Harupindi and Harunandima
Tributary chiefs – Njerere, Ndumba, Negove, Chirimuhanzu, Zimuto and many others	--

The table shows that in the hierarchy of supremacy, Rozvi men and women were equal in status, however, men seem to have been 'more equal' than women in the sense that they occupied far more positions of supremacy than women. In the table there are four categories of positions. They include: a) Positions that are completely male; b) positions that Mutasa depicts as male but which are debatable from an understanding of Shona history and culture; c) positions that are exclusively female and d) positions that are occupied by both men and women. It is the last category of positions which demonstrates beyond all doubts that women and men are divine equals in real essence in the Rozvi traditional culture. A table needs to be drawn which displays the four different categories of positions of supremacy which were found in the Rozvi state.

Positions that are male	Positions that are female	Positions that are both male and female	Debatable positions
High God	Sacred virgins	Spirit mediums	Tributary and sub-chiefs
Senior guardian spirits		Court councilors	
Junior guardian spirits			
Chief priest			
Rain makers			
Paramount chief			

If one uses Shona history and culture to judge the way Mutasa presents the positions of supremacy from a gendered perspective, he/she will agree with him in all respects save his presentation of the position of the tributary and sub chiefs. It is debatable whether or not this position was 'male' in the pre-colonial Shona culture.

Debatable Positions: Male or Female in Pre-Colonial Shona Culture

That position of the tributary and/or sub chief is open to debate pertaining to whether or not it was only for males to occupy. Mutasa seems to suggest that the position of the tributary chief was only to be occupied by males in the traditional Shona culture. That is the case since he gives only male citizens occupying that position. Be that as it may, what needs to be taken note of is that as tete or mukunda (aunt and daughter) in her natal family, a woman could be tasked to head a particular territory as chief and/or sub-chief. That could happen if her natal family was a family which was entitled to chieftaincy (Mhuri youmambo). Mararike's (2003: 11-12) says,

Records dating back to the seventeenth century indicate that Ishe Mutasa had many female Madzishe who administered their matunhu. In the nineteenth century, and early twentieth centuries the daughters, sisters and paternal aunts (madzitetete) of the Manyika Ishe were sometimes appointed to rule over many matunhu. There are also references to masadunhu echikadzi among the Jindwi of Bocha and Ishe NemaKonde's area. Other accounts indicate that women ruled as both masadunhu and Madzishe in Mutoko, Seke and Chihota...

What that means is, ushe (chieftaincy) is not the exclusive entitlement of men in Zimbabwe (Mararike 2003: 11). Zvarevashe who is another Zimbabwean novelist of Shona expression depicts a woman playing the role of a sub-chief. In Zvarevashe's novel, Mandivavarira is a sub-chief of the Sadzaguru people of Chikomba District of the pre-colonial times. If it is true that women could be tributary and sub-chiefs in pre-colonial times, then, the position of tributary and sub chief, which was both sacred and secular, reveals that in the pre-colonial Zimbabwe, men and women were somewhat divine equals in real essence.

Probably Mutasa misreads the history of the Rozvi and of the Shona in general when he depicts only men occupying the position of the tributary chief. However, it may be probable that Mutasa, who is treating only the Rozvi history and culture and not the history and the culture of the Shona people in general, is capturing what was the case in the Rozvi state which of course was separate and apart from what was happening among the Manyika which Mararike discusses in his work and among the Zezuru of Chikomba as what Zvarevashe asserts in his novel *Gonawapotera*. If that is the case, it might not be worthy to generalize concepts from one African culture on all African cultures since African cultures were and still are not homogeneous. Therefore, one may be forced to agree with the classical view of external validity which says that, external generalizability and/or external validity “is of little help to qualitative researchers” (Schofield, 2002: 177). In fact, classical theorists do not want to apply the idea of external validity to qualitative research because they hold that “it is unimportant, unachievable or both” (Schofield, 2002: 172).. They consider it to be unachievable since most qualitative research focus on a single case study, (Schofield, Ibid: 173). If there are fewer instances when men and women behaved like divine equals in real essence than instances in which they did not in Rozvi culture and tradition as what is depicted in Mutasa’s novels, Sorola’s theory which she built basing on her research which she carried out among the Igbo should not be generalized on all African cultures without caution. That is the case since those cultures are not homogenous despite their sharing concepts. This is the point where external generalizability should be replaced in qualitative research by concepts such as that of “fittingness”, that is proposed by Guba and Lincoln (quoted in Schofield 2002) and that of “comparability” which is proposed by Goetz and LeCompte (cited in Schofield, 2002). By comparability, Goetz and LeCompte refer,

...to the degree to which components of a study – including the units of analysis, concepts generated, population characteristic and settings – are sufficiently well described and defined that other researchers can use the results of the study as a basis for comparison” (Goetz and LeCompte, quoted by Schofield, 2002:178).

Due to their understanding of comparability which is opposed to generalizability, Goetz and LeCompte argue that, “qualitative studies gain their potential for applicability to other situations by providing...“comparability” (quoted by Schofield, 2002: 178). Probably what Should be noted is that, Sofola’s idea of a dual-sex-system that is based on ‘holistic harmony’ did not really exist in the pre-colonial Rozvi culture since men and women were not total divine equals in essence for men occupied more positions than women in the hierarchy of supremacy that was both sacred and secular. Therefore, “comparability” rather than ultimate generalizability should apply when scholars seek to apply theories, developed in some parts of Africa, to cultural realities separate and apart from the cultures that nature those theories.

For Guba and Lincoln (quoted in Schofield 2002: 178) the concept of “fittingness” with its emphasis on analyzing the degree to which the situation studied matches other situations in which one is interested, provides a more realistic and workable way of thinking about the generalizability of qualitative research results than do more classical approaches. The concept of “fittingness” seems to be more appropriate than generalizability when one analyses Sofola’s claim that the woman is portrayed as an equal of man in traditional African religious proceedings. This is because in most cases although African cultures are not homogenous but they have a lot in common.

Woman as Wife

In Shona culture, a woman is wife in relation to her husband. In the same culture, a married woman has both what we can term *de jure* and *de facto* husbands since she is married to a family and not solely to a particular individual who pays lobola (bride price) for her (Charamba, 2011).. Her *de jure* husband is the man who pays lobola for her and who has the right to share conjugal rights with her. Her *de facto* husbands are her husband’s younger brothers and nephews (her husband’s sisters’ sons and her husband’s father’s sisters’ sons) She has to do everything that she does for her *de jure* husband to these *de facto* husbands save having sex with them. For the sake of convenience, this paper will discuss the dual-sex system in Mutasa’s novels making references to the relationship between women and their *de jure* husbands. There are women who are depicted as wives in Mutasa’s novels. They include Harunandima, who is wife to Tavada, There is also Harupindi, who is Chirisamhuru’s wife. After her husband’s death, Ndomboya is inherited by her husband’s young brother Ticharwa. Therefore she is wife to him.

Harupindi and Chirisamhuru

As wife and husband, Harupindi and Chirisamhuru complement one another in different ways marking the existence of the dual-sex system in the Rozvi State. In *Nhume YaMambo*, as wife to the Mambo, Harupindi sits at the Mambo’s court as one of his councilors she deliberates on issues which pertain to Chirisamhuru’s effort to reclaim his father’s leadership position from Dyembeu. For instance she makes some critical decisions on the court that are readily adopted by the court councilors. In that sense she complements her husband’s efforts to become the Paramount chief of the Rozvi. Harupindi is at the front in the civil war between Dyembeu and Chirisamhuru’s armies. She performs some very critical roles which aid Chirisamhuru’s army to remain strong and united. At one time, Harupindi together with Harunandima, plot an idea that helps Chirisamhuru’s army to conquer Dyembeu’s.

The two women organize that Tavada disguises himself as Mavhudzi the high priest of the Mabweadziva shrine whilst they disguise themselves as sacred virgins from the shrine. They organize this in order to frighten Dyembeu's army by announcing to them a message of defeat; and a message of conquest to Chirisamhuru's army as if they are personnel from Mabweadziva. After the whole plot is successfully carried out, Tavada, who is Chirisamhuru's army commander, comments that,

Varwi vaChirisamhuru vakadengenyesa makomo namatondo noruzha rwokufara. Vaipembera, kuimba nokutambira vadzimu venyika neZame", (Chirisamhuru's soldiers made a great noise of joy that reverberated across mountains and the whole forest. They were dancing and singing in praise of ancestral guardian spirits of the Mamboland and the Mabweadziva cult). (Mutasa, 1990: 194).

Again Tavada comments that, "Varwi vaDyembeu navatungamiriri vavo vakarukutika ura hukange huchadambuka nokutya" (Dyembeu's soldiers and their leaders were gripped with fear and their intestines behaved as if they were going to be in pieces due to the fear that gripped them), (Mutasa, 1990: 194). The contrast between what happens in Chirisamhuru's camp and what happens in Dyembeu's camp after Tavada, Harupindi and Harunandima disguise themselves as sacred beings from Mabweadziva shows that Harupindi's and Harunandima's war strategy proves its worthy.

In *Misodzi Dikita Neropa*, Chirisamhuru becomes angry with Mavhudzi the high priest of the Mabweadziva shrine and the other sacred beings from the same shrine to the extent of wanting to massacre all of them. Killing people from the holy shrine was a sacrilegious abomination in Rozvi culture. If Chirisamhuru would kill them, his power would come to a halt forthwith. Knowing very well the nasty and inimical consequences of killing sacred beings from the Mabweadziva shrine, Harupindi intervenes tactfully to stop Chirisamhuru's soldiers from killing Mavhudzi and his whole entourage. The novelist says that,

Ipapo Harupindi akasvetukira mudariro achizeesa jira java raMambo. Aidaidzira kuti varwi varege kupfura uye manyusa atonhore. Varwi vakatya kuti vangabatanidzira nanyachide waMambo ndokurega kupfura" (Without much ado, Harupindi jumped into the midst of the people swaying a red cloth that was part of the Mambo's regalia. She did that ordering Chirisamhuru's soldiers to stop killing the people from the Mabweadziva shrine and encouraging the rain makers to hold their peace). (Mutasa, 1991: 36).

In that sense, Harupindi works for the benefit of her husband through making sure Chirisamhuru's soldiers do not kill Mavhudzi the high priest of the Mabweadziva shrine. When Chirisamhuru embarks on his two formidable projects of constructing a new Shrine (Ndarikure) and of constructing a ladder to the moon (Nhururamwedzi) Harupindi supports him without ceasing. She even dies when the ladder to the moon weakens and falls down whilst she accompanies the soldiers who are tasked with the duty of going up the ladder with the aim of hanging down the moon. Therefore the dual-sex system is evident in the manner Chirisamhuru and Harupindi relate as husband and wife.

Harupindi also complements her husband in matters to do with sex. When she discovers that Chirisamhuru is romantically infatuated to a point where he wants to have sex with her for the first time after they have married, she signals Tavada to go out of the hut where she and Chirisamhuru are. She does that as a way of creating a free environment for them to give each other conjugal rights. Tavada says that, "Ndakaona ziso raHarupindi kuti riri kunditi ndichibuda vasare voga", (I read from Harupindi's looks that she was eager to have me leave her and Chirisamhuru alone in the hut), (Mutasa 1990: 165).

Tavada and Harunandima

As husband and wife, Tavada and Harunandima complement one another at different levels of life including at the level of politics and of sexual engagement. In the first place, Tavada is tasked with the duty of being the emissary of the Mambo and Harunandima helps him in different ways to enable him to successfully execute that duty. At one moment, she defies Tavada's idea that she should not accompany him to the Mabweadziva shrine on the pretext that her presence would not be tolerated there. In defying Tavada's idea, Harunandima says that,

Kana ndava mukadzi wendambakuwa ini ndatova ndambakuwawo...Panopinda iwe panopindikawo neni...ndinoinda uye pose pauchandopinda ini ndinenge ndiripo" (The moment I become wife to a sacred person is the very moment I also become sacred too...where you will pass through I will also pass through...I will go with you and whatever you enter I will enter it too) (Nhume YaMambo p 136).

Her words are a declaration of the concept of a dual-sex system which in that novel is marked by the close working together of a husband and a wife as partners. Harunandima believes that a wife should perform the same duties that her husband performs in the politics of the state.

Mavhudzi also utters the words that celebrate and exalt the need for a husband and wife to work closely together for the success of one another when he says to Harunandima,

Zvino Haruna, zvauri mudonzvo wechibwe chinotedza ichi, unenge uriwe mubiki, mukushidziri, mukodzongi, mushanduri muraviri nomupakuri wezvose zvenhume huru iyi”, (Now that Haruna, you are a walking stick (wife) to this untouchable being (Tavada), you will be the cook, fire lighter, brewer, mixer, taster and distributor of all that pertain to the duties of the emissary of the Mambo) (Nhume YaMambo P. 139).

Mavhudzi’s words show that a wife compliments her husband in everything that relates to his socio-political duties. However since Mavhudzi considers Haruna a mere ‘walking stick’ to Tavada, it indicates that Haruna is the object of her husband’s use. That concept defies Sofola’s idea of a dual-sex system that is based on the concept of equality between men and women. As wife, the woman remains an ‘acted upon’ and not an actor since it will be her husband who will be the actor and the genuine mover of history whilst she remains a subordinate to him.

Tavada is chosen the leader of Chirisamhuru’s army that has to fight Dyembeu’s army. Harunandima aids him in different ways to make sure he succeeds as the chief commander of Chirisamhuru’s army. It is Harunandima and her twin sister Harupindi who organize that Tavada disguises himself as Mavhudzi and Harunandima and Harupindi disguise themselves as sacred virgins from the sacred shrine in order to try and induce fear into Dyembeu’s army and army leaders. They successfully stage manage the whole scene and Dyembeu’s soldiers become very much gripped with fear and they become very much unready to take part in the struggle. That contributes to Chirisamhuru’s victory and it creates a name for Tavada, the leader of his army.

In *Misodzi Dikita Neropa*, Tavada is sent by Chirisamhuru to go around the Rozvi state inspecting progress which different chiefdoms are making towards eradicating mountains and moving them to Chirisamhuru’s place for the purpose of constructing Ndarikure. Harunandima accompanies him on all those journeys. When Tavada is beaten his finger by a woman from Chief Chikwanda of Gutu area, it is Harunandima who takes him to her father’s place in Zimuto where he receives medication. Tavada’s life is served by Harunandima and her people.

Harunandima displays this idea of a dual-sex system when she seduces Tavada and Tavada ends up enjoying her seductive strategies since he makes these comments,

Ndkayerekana ndobvundira mazamu ndichiasvinyanga somusuva. Mazamu acho ngaaurungane, ugoona kuzara nokubumba achingozenga kunge zifa romukaka! Kana kuri kunyorovera nokuurungana ungati izai rehuku rabudiswa mudumbu ichivhiiwa” (From nowhere, I found myself fondling her breasts which were full and rounded in shape and which felt like some well packaged sour milk! When it comes to their tenderness and rounded shape they appeared like a warm egg that has just been untimely ripped from a recently slaughtered hen) (Mutasa, 1990: 128).

What that means is, Tavada and Harunandima work towards gratifying one another sexually. Therefore, as wife and husband they complement one another in sexual engagements.

Ndomboya and Ticharwa

Ticharwa is a younger brother to Ndomboya’s husband. He inherits her after his brother’s death. Although the novelist does not give much on how the two relate as husband and wife, still, one can sense a complimentary relationship between them. When Ndomboya is sent by Chirisamhuru to chief Njerere’s place to garner support for him in the war for chieftaincy, her husband Ticharwa accompanies her. He also accompanies her when she goes to ask for rains at the Mabweadziva shrine. The Ticharwa and Ndomboya relationship is important in this discussion of the dual-sex system in that it is Ndomboya, who is complimented by Ticharwa (a man) and not vice versa as is the case with the other husband and wife relationships in Mutasa’s novels.

The husband and wife relationship in Mutasa’s novels demonstrates to some extent how the philosophy of ‘holistic harmony’ was lived and celebrated among members of the pre-colonial Rozvi society. However, most of those relationships studied here save the relationship between Ndomboya and Ticharwa, seem to indicate that women were appendages of men in the Rozvi state. That alone defies the existence of a genuine dual-sex system of socio-political power sharing fully developed by African peoples and based on women as wives which Sofola (1998) talks about. That is conclusive since in most cases men (the husbands) are the actors whilst the women (wives) perform ancillary roles that serve to aid their husbands to achieve whatever they intend to. That is the case with the wife and husband relationships between Chirisamhuru and Harupindi and Tavada and Harunandima. Harunandima and Harupindi seem to be behind successful men – that is Tavada and Chirisamhuru respectively. That is why Mavhudzi considers Harunandima to be merely Tavada’s walking stick (tsvimbo), (Mutasa, 1990: 139).

The woman in Sofola's dual-sex system does not hold to the saying, "Behind every successful man is a woman. Rather she is guided by the saying, "The strength of a man is in his woman" and/or "A soldier with a mother does not die at the war front", (Sofola, 1998: 63). One cannot deny totally that the strengths of Chirisamhuru and Tavada are in their wives Harupindi and Harunandima respectively, however, Harupindi and Harunandima seem to be behind (mere aids to) successful men more than those men do have strength in them. That is because the agenda that has to be achieved is their husbands' agendas not theirs. That in its own leaves Sofola's concept of a dual-sex system somewhat questionable. Unlike the modern African woman, the woman in Sofola's dual-sex system is not eager to be seen but is eager to be heard. As such, she is guided by the saying, "If the Ada (daughter) says that a day-old chick is a hen, so it is", (Sofola, 1998: 63). In *Nhume YaMambo*, that sort of spirit is demonstrated by Harunandima. Tavada insists that Harunandima should not accompany him to Mabweadziva, but Harunandima defies that at all odds and she goes with him. Again Taavada insists that he is an emissary of the Mambo to the 'holy' shrine of Mabweadziva, as such, he cannot be husband to poor Harunandima. Harunandima is eager to marry Tavada and she corners him into a sexual encounter that leads to their marriage.

What that means is that the dual-sex system which Sofola parades in her critical endeavor was prevalent in the pre-colonial Igbo society also applies in part and not in whole to the Rozvi culture of the pre-colonial era of Zimbabwe. Therefore, scholars need not to be guided by the principle of generalizability rather they should be guided by the principles of fittingness and comparability when they deal with aspects of cultural that seem to apply to different African cultures.

Woman as Daughter

In Sofola's thesis, as daughter in a family, a woman closely partners with men to perform different life activities. Again, as daughter in a family, a woman works closely with her father and brothers to ensure the family's continuity of existence. In Mutasa's novels there are two women who partner with men as daughters in their natal families. There is Ndomboya, who is daughter to the late Mambo Gomboremvura and who is sister to Chirisamhuru the aspiring Mambo. There is also Karukai who is daughter to Chirisamhuru.

Ndomboya versus Chirisamhuru

The concept of a dual-sex system is evident in the manner Ndomboya and Chirisamhuru relate as brother and sister. When Chirisamhuru finds the go getting tougher in his struggle for chieftaincy, he visits his sister Ndomboya who is at chief Zimuto's place to seek advice and assistance. Ndomboya complements Chirisamhuru's efforts to fight for their father's leadership position by encouraging him to be brave and to continue fighting for what rightfully belongs to him and not to Dyembeu the usurper. At one time Ndomboya says to Chirisamhuru,

Baba vako vaiva ngwe, saka iwewe chimuka mwana wengwe. Bvuta umambo hwababa vedu kuna Dyembeu ari kuhupamba”, (Our father was a real leopard, so you (Chirisamhuru) be a true young one of a leopard. Reclaim by force our father’s chieftaincy from Dyembeu who is grabbing it. (Mutasa, 1990: 15).

With those words, she encourages, as daughter of the Gomboremvura family, her brother to be brave and to fight for chieftaincy without ceasing. From that moment on, Chirisamhuru becomes geared to battle with Dyembeu for chieftaincy.

Ndomboya is a medium for the ancestral spirit of her grandfather Chirisamhuru. As a spirit medium, she is possessed twice in the story. She becomes possessed when Chirisamhuru visits her at Zimuto and she becomes possessed when Chirisamhuru’s entourage gets to Manyanga from Zimuto. On both instances the spirit that possesses her encourages Chirisamhuru to fight for his father’s chieftaincy. At Manyanga she deliberates on what Chirisamhuru and his delegation should do in their bid to defeat Dyembeu in the battle for chieftaincy. She tells them that they should send Tavada to the Mabweadziva shrine to convince Mavhudzi to support Chirisamhuru and not Dyembeu in the struggle for chieftaincy. She also tells them to seek military support from different tributary and sub-chiefs . Ndomboya is prepared to indulge into an incestuous relationship with her brother Chirisamhuru in fulfillment of a custom that demands that a man who would want to be a strong Mambo had to indulge in an incestuous relationship with her sister in full view of the majority of his subjects. Ndomboya says that,

Chero zvenhovo usanetseke ndiri pano. Chikuru chii makuna-kuna kana kurega umambo hwababa vedu huchidiyiwa naDyembeu?” (Even if it comes to the custom of committing incest, do not worry for I am here and well prepared for it. What is more important than the other between committing incest with you and letting Dyembeu keep hold to our father’s chieftaincy?). (Mutasa, 1990: 30).

Mdomboya is ready to be shamelessly exposed in public through being sexually used in the full view of the people for the benefit of her brother. That shows how Ndomboya, as a daughter in the Gomboremvura family, upholds the dual-sex system that had roots in the principle of holistic harmony. Ndomboya contributes towards her brother’s success in the struggle for chieftaincy in a very unique way. Tavada says that,

Asi mangwanani oga oga, mai vaitora mhandara dzose dzaitungamirirwa naKarukai. Vaindokwira paziware raivapo pakatarisana nopagere hondo yaDyembeu. Vaindosvikomira vakaita mutsetse vakatarisa varwi vaDyembeu. Vaizviita vose vari mushwi sembambaira...vaidanidzira vachizamura nokukotama vachinyomba varwi nezvombo zvavavengi...izvi zvaitwa...semhinganidzo dzokugura simba rmuveni” (Every morning my mother (Ndomboya) would lead all the virgin girls who were under the leadership of Karukai to the top of a hill that was very close to where Dyembeu’s army camped. The virgins would stand in a straight line facing Dyembeu’s army. They would do that when they were totally naked like sweet potatoes...they would shout moving their bodies backwards and forth and castigating Dyembeu’s army and its weapons...that was done...as a strategy of weakening the enemy’s army). (Mutasa, 1990: 189).

Therefore, Ndomboya develops into a war strategist in her own way for the purpose of complimenting her brother’s efforts to take over the position of Mambo from Dyembeu the usurper. Ndomboya also complements Chirisamhuru’s efforts to become Mambo. She bears a son, that is Tavada. It is Tavada who later becomes Chirisamhuru’s emissary to the Mabweadziva shrine and Chirisamhuru’s army commander. In Shona they say Muzukuru akakunda mwana wokubereka (A nephew surpasses one’s own son). That is because the Shona believe in the saying, “Kuwanda kwakanaka museve wakapoteramuzukuru (There is something good in numbers for a nephew shields an arrow that is aimed at his uncle). It is Tavada – Chirisamhuru’s nephew - who is Chirisamhuru’s emissary to the Mabweadziva Shrine and who is Chirisamhuru’s army commander. Without Ndomboya, Tavada was not going to be born: without Tavada, Chirisamhuru was not going to receive support from Mavhudzi and without Mavhudzi’s support and without an able army commander like Tavada, Chirisamhuru was not going to defeat Dyembeu in the struggle for chieftaincy.

Karukai versus Chirisamhuru

As a daughter in the Chirisamhuru family, Karukai works hand in hand with Chirisamhuru her father to make sure he succeeds in achieving his socio-political goals. When Chirisamhuru wants to make sure no one dares to become intimate with Harunandima whom he loves dearly, he sends Karukai to go and spy on her when Harunandima is away from him. Karukai does that although Ndomboya makes sure she does not stop Tavada and Harunandima to become intimate. As what has been already discussed, Karukai is the leader of the virgins which Ndomboya takes up the hill totally naked as a means of weakening Dyembeu’s army. What that means is, Karukai and the other girls sacrifice their dignity and human worth for the benefit of Chirisamhuru.

In *Misodzi Dikita Neropa*, when Chirisamhuru is engaging in dictatorial tendencies when he asks the people to build for him a new Shrine separate and apart from the Mabweadziva and when he plans to hang down the moon in order to satisfy his selfish goals, it is Karukai who is appointed by the other women to reason with his father through outlining why women thought that it was not worthy for the Mambo to hang down the moon. The women considered the moon to be of vital importance to them since they held it to enforce natural cycles and events that condition women's survival. They include the moon's role of determining their either getting pregnant or not and the moon's power to regulate menstrual cycles. Although Chirisamhuru remains adamant, Karukai makes an effort to reason with the despotic leader to stop his acts of bigotry.

Although women work together with men as daughters of a given clan, they seem to remain more of appendages of men. That is because, Mutasa depicts them working for the success of men and not for their own success. Ndomboya and Karukai make painful sacrifices and compromises for the benefit of Chirisamhuru yet Chirisamhuru does not want to compromise in any meaningful way that benefits the two women.. When Ndomboya feels Harunandima has to marry Tavada and not Chirisamhuru, Chirisamhuru imposes his will and does not want to compromise. He sends word to Ndomboya and the other people who are with Harunandima in a faraway place that, “kana wangobata Haruna wake, iyeye kunyanzi ndiani chirango chacho rufu” (Who ever tries to become intimate to Harunandima, who is Chirisamhuru's prospective wife, his punishment is death), (Mutasa, 1990: 144). Therefore Ndomboya is ready to sacrifice her self-worth, her human dignity and respectability for the benefit of Chirisamhuru and yet Chirisamhuru is not ready to compromise in ways that benefit Ndomboya. Therefore,, in the dual-sex structure which Mutasa depicts women are more of appendages of men than their equal partners in socio-political issues. This is also evident in the manner Chirisamhuru and Karukai relate. Karukai sacrifices her time to try and make sure Harunandima does not become intimate to Tavada for the sole benefit of her father. She is also in the company of the virgin girls who stand nude in front of Dyembeu's army in a bid to weaken them before the battle for chieftaincy commences, yet when she begs her father to stop his project of seeking to hang down the moon for the benefit of the women and some other people, Chirisamhuru refuses to compromise. Therefore, from what is evident in Mutasa's novels, the dual-sex system which Sofola talks about did not happen in a system of holistic harmony among the Rozvi people of the pre-colonial era of Zimbabwean history. That is because men enjoyed a lion's share in the manner they related with women as wives, as daughters and as partners in religious proceedings. Probably Africana womanists should take heed of what Obiechina asserts when he says that,

The idea of the pre-colonial traditional society as a haven of peace, a state of egalitarian self-satisfaction, idyllic bliss and sweet reasonableness is a utopian myths as falsifying as the opposite idea which sees it as a state of chronic anarchy, a bloody battle-field in which the weak [the women], and the helpless were trodden down by the strong. (1975: 205).

The radical feminist thinkers view the African past to have been a bloody battle-field in which the women were trodden down by the might men whilst the Africana womanist view that past, as a haven of peace, a state of egalitarian self-satisfaction, idyllic bliss and sweet reasonableness where men and women related in holistic harmony. The two groups of scholars stick to some two falsifying myths as Obiechina has observed. They need to share and to learn from each other. The Radical feminist should learn to appreciate the good in the manner men and women related in the different African societies before they were colonized and the Africana womanist should learn to accept the bad habits and contacts in the manner men and women related before the colonization of the different African societies. The two groups of scholars should struggle to meet half-way if they are to come up with a genuine philosophy of gender for African people.

Conclusion

This article has established that, generalizability (external validity) cannot readily apply in qualitative research undertakings. It may only apply partly but not wholly when a theory, which was developed in another African society and culture is applied to other cultures and societies of Africa which are separate and apart from that original African society and culture from which the theory was founded. Therefore, if researchers apply wholesale those theories developed in some African societies and cultures on societies and cultures which are separate and apart from them, upholding of course in the process the notions of African sisterhood, African brotherhood and African culture, serious cultural distortions are apt to happen in the process of application. However, it is a fact that African people have a lot of ties (cultural, political, economic, linguistic, religious and social) which bind them together. As such, what is propounded as a theory in one African society and culture can apply, in part, to other African cultures. It is therefore advisable to those who adopt African Womanhood and Africana Womanism as theories to scout for what is relevant to their cultures in those theories. However, it is important to note that at the moment, all African societies have something to learn from African Womanhood and Africana Womanism as theories of gender in Africa. In their instances of use, and in the application of the tenets of these theories of African womanhood, to non-Igbo cultures, generalizability should be sacrificed and “the principles of “fittingness” and “comparability” should be emphasized. Basing on its findings using Mutasa’s novels that treat pre-colonial Rozvi culture, this study lobbies for the idea that, scholars of African womanhood such as Sofola and others, should stop theorizing on the understanding of the African past as a haven of peace, a state of egalitarian self-satisfaction, idyllic bliss and sweet reasonableness where men and women worked together in holistic harmony for they will be theorizing on a false myth.

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