

**MODERN TRAGEDY : A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE  
ELEMENTS OF TRAGEDY WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO  
N.A. MILUBI'S PLAYS**

by

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(i)

## DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that the work contained in this thesis is my own original work, and has not previously in its entirety or in part, been submitted at any University for a degree.

  
SIGNATURE

  
DATE

(ii)

## **DEDICATION**

This dissertation is dedicated to my three daughters, namely;

**Lavhelani, Tshinanne and Elelwani.**

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## CHAPTER ONE

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Modern tragedy is a concept applied by literary critics to refer to a modified form of tragic literary work of art in the twentieth century. Contrary to the ancient or traditional version of tragedy whereby calamity befalls a greater man or nobleman, contemporary tragic dramatists have emerged with a kind of tragedy in which disaster and misfortune befall an ordinary man, a simple peasant or a layman. In this regard, the research project compares and contrasts ancient tragedy and modern tragedy in order to make the difference clear. Elements of tragedy, namely, solemnity of action, reversal, discovery, calamity and the purgative effect it has on the audience or student reading drama will receive focus in this study.

The researcher has decided to focus on N.A. Milubi's works since he is a Tshivenda<sup>^</sup> playwright whose dramatic works end in tragedy. Again, the quality of the work is such that compared to other playwrights in Tshivenda<sup>^</sup> drama, he seems to stand head and shoulders above them all.

The research project of this nature will be of considerable value to playwrights, audience and students reading drama since it attempts to provide answers to questions such as: Why do modern tragic dramatists choose to deviate from the ancient or traditional version

of tragedy? How and to what extent do contemporary African tragic dramatists conform to or deviate from Aristotle's definition of tragedy? Do calamity and disaster that a simple man, an antihero or antiheroine encounter have a purgative effect on the part of the audience or students studying drama? The research will reflect on all these pertinent questions, and it will as a matter of fact, make a significant contribution to Tshivenda research as a whole and to the study of tragedy in particular.

## 1.2 AIM

The aim of this research project is to analyse critically elements of tragedy in modern Tshivenda drama, and, to show the extent to which Tshivenda modern tragedy conforms to Ancient or traditional theories of tragedy. It is the aim of this research project to compare and contrasts ancient or traditional tragedy and modern tragedy to make the difference clear, and, also, to reveal that like any other literary art work, Tshivenda tragedy is the product of the tragic experience of tragic dramatists who bring tragedy into a closer relationship with African real life situation.

The research will therefore be of great value as it will show that elements of tragedy do not only occur in English (and Greek) drama, but also in Tshivenda drama. The study will reveal the need for diversity of approach in the study of Tshivenda tragedy. And, although literature is universal, this study will show that as in any other language, the Tshivenda tragic experience is unique in its expressions.

## 1.3 METHODS

Methods of research in this research project shall be primary, secondary as well as textual analysis.

With regard to the primary source research method, guidance is sought through consultation with professional people such as lectures, students studying drama, tragic dramatists, actors of both audio and audio-visual performances.

The purpose of using the secondary source research method, is to establish as accurately as possible the significance of the information already written by some scholars or theatrically performed. Information is searched from library books, articles from journals, magazines, newspapers, research papers, dissertations, papers read at seminars and theatrical performances of audio-visual plays on radios, TVs and cinemas.

By using the textual analysis research method the printed texts of the work of playwrights are placed side by side for comparison, for the sole purpose of establishing what the tragic dramatist intends to be the final version of his tragic plays. This method entails the interpretation of the text in accordance with the views of the literary critics on the subject.

#### 1.4 SCOPE

The scope of the study is centered around 'Modern Tragedy' as a literary component, elements of tragedy and theories thereof. Elements of tragedy to be analysed include inter alia, solemnity of action, reversal, discovery, calamity and the purgative effect that modern tragedy has on the audience. Also, the scope will be limited to the analysis of Tshivenda modern tragic plays of N.A. Milubi, namely, **Ndi Mitodzi Muni**, **Mukosi wa Lufu**, **Madombini a Ngoho** and **Khoro dzi sa Dzhenelani**.

## 1.1 SUMMARY OF PREVIOUS VIEWS ON DRAMA

### 1.1.1 R.N. Maḡadzhe

Maḡadzhe makes a survey of African drama and Tshivenda drama in particular. He makes a critical appraisal of dramatic criteria with special reference to Milubi's tragic literary art work namely 'Ndi Miḡodzi Muni' and **Mukosi wa Lufu** . In his biographical account of Milubi, Maḡadzhe reveals that the effectiveness of Milubi's plays is due to his African tragic experience. The heart of the conflict in these plays centres around conflicting beliefs, religions, marriage customs, African corrupted administrative system of Governments, nepotism and favouritism. And, all these atrocities bring about sorrows and affliction to human existence.

Admittedly, Milubi is a twentieth century tragic playwright who, like many African literary artists, writes much about African real life situations. Notably, the diversity of literary themes offered by African culture is prevalent throughout Milubi's literary art works.

With regard to Milubi's tragic experience Maḡadzhe (1985:4) asserts that:

*There is nothing which affects him more than human suffering and the dark confusion of mankind as well as the hazy spiritual values which he finds in the world. Most of his writings, which include poetry and drama, are pervaded by a sense of human suffering.*

From this assertion it can be noted that suffering, life affliction and sorrows of existence are the main concern of Milubi's tragic literary art works. In this way he shows concern for evils that are destroying human values. In his tragic plays **Ndi Mitodzi Muni**, **Mukosi wa Lufu**, **Madombini a Ngoho** and **Khoro dzi sa Dzhenelani**, Milubi presents man's life solemn action of unhappiness and sorrow perpetrated by a flaw either in man himself or his immediate environment.

Maḍadzhe goes on to outline the requirements and criteria for drama. He explicates in Milubi's tragic plays unity of time, unity of action, and unity of place. He analyses aspects such as plot, exposition, meteoric moment, complication, climax and denouement, suspense and preparation. Maḍadzhe emphasises the indispensability of plot, characterisation, conflict and style. In this regard Maḍadzhe (1985:11) writes:

*Requirements and criteria for drama are dynamic depending on the period and environment in which a drama is written. Today, African drama has acquired several requirements and criteria which are different from European, American and Asian.*

Remarkably, Milubi's tragic plays, like many other contemporary African works, are politically inclined. It is therefore imperative to study contemporary Tshivenda literature not in isolation, but rather, it should be viewed in a more general context of the whole African struggle for emancipation from colonialism. This is also the struggle for cultural revival.

The tragic plays **Ndi Mitodzi Muni** and **Mukosi wa Lufu**, as Madadzhe indicates, reflect the life of an African caught up in the dilemma of reconciling the extremes of two cultural values. **Ndi Mitodzi Muni** which literary translates as; 'what tears are this?', is much more appropriately the cry and tears of a confused African whose vaulting ambition to achieve honour perpetrates his fall from the position of greatness into insignificance. In the same way **Mukosi wa Lufu** is a howl of agony and a cry of death. It, however, depicts the disappearance of African culture and the anguish that is experienced by the African in this cultural conflict. And, in this regard Wauthier (1966:17) states:

*Throughout history the demand for national independence has gone hand in hand with cultural revival. One of the most striking example of this trend is to be found in the national movements of Eastern Europe during the last century. There the grammarians, historians and poets united in their struggle to revitalize the soul of their people. The grammarians by forging a national language from dialect, the historian by substituting the history of a nation and that of a series of dynasties, and poets, by exalting revolutionary struggle.*

Similarly, Milubi's tragic plays are resolutely committed to African emancipation from cultural and political bondage.

### 1.1.2 N.W. Tshamano

In his critical study of some Radio Venda Broadcast, Tshamano outlines aspects such as technical tools available to script-writer, structural elements of radio drama, characterization and theme. These are basic criteria associated with radio drama as a sub-genre. What is of special significance and relevant to this research project is the structural elements of Radio Drama, namely; characterization and theme.

In the selected Radio dramas that Tshamano analyses, the conflict is that of two opposing forces, namely a clash of African culture and the Christian or Western civilization. Regarding conflict in drama Tshamano (1993:10) quotes Dancyger as saying:

*Drama means in brief, conflict.*

In all the Radio dramas that Tshamano studies, characters are in conflict with one another or with the community or with themselves. The conflict stems from forces in opposition related to marriage customs, religious principles, and witchcraft. In this regard Tshamano (1993:101) states:

*Conflict presupposes two or more opposing forces. The force in opposition may be two individuals, an individual and society, an individual and supernatural powers or beings, or an individual and his/her innerself. The latter*

*usually involves a choice between values which seem to carry equal importance to the main character.*

In **I shavha i sia muinga i yafhi?**, the conflict is centred around Tshengelo, a status-seeker. Tshengelo is highly learned with M.A. degree and is married to an ordinary housewife with standard eight. Tshengelo feels that his wife's low qualifications contribute in lowering his status. He wants to marry Mavis, a nurse. Members of the family are against such marriage. Tshengelo is ultimately expelled from the teaching profession and this leads to his own self-discovery. He goes back to Tshililo his housewife and asks for forgiveness.

Witchcraft, which is typical of an African literary theme, is the main cause of the conflict in **A thi nga do tou fa ndi do tou lovha**. Western laws do not recognize witchcraft. A court of law does not find Mashango guilty despite the fact that Mashango admits that he used ta hatred-potion to intensify the conflict between him, (Mashango) and his former wife, Marengwa.

Tshamano also indicates that there is a close relationship between plot, theme, characterization and the playwright's tragic experience. This relationship stems from the fact that radio drama depends primarily on spoken words to deliver its dramatic theme.

Tshamano portrays the contribution made by Radio drama to the field of African literature in general and Tshivenda literature in particular. Radio plays are of traditional local

themes peculiar to Africans. The influence of Tshivenda culture in the modern world is felt and cultural conflict between modern and traditionally oriented people is exposed. The role of the traditional doctors is depicted. Radio drama as a literary sub-genre reflects a typical modern African milieu where in most cases, Christian or Western civilization shapes the people's way of thinking and expression.

### 1.1.3 M.L. Bopape

M.L. Bopape has written an article in the **South African Journal of African Languages** in which the nature of tragedy as it manifests itself in a Northern Sotho tragic text is investigated. Bopape considers elements of tragedy which include, inter alia, aspects such as the world, the tragic action, the tragic hero, dramatic language as well as suffering. Bopape points out that a survey of criticisms produced over the years indicates that such criticisms are divided by Orr into various historical periods, namely, Ancient Greek tragedy, Renaissance tragedy and Modern tragedy. Bopape (1994:41) quotes Orr as having stating that:

*Each major tragic mode contains its own distinctive historical expression ... The Greek mode is basically divine, the Renaissance mode predominantly noble, while the Modern mode is fundamentally social.*

This implies that the Greek mode is centred on the alienation of heroes from divine forces whereas the Renaissance tragedy concerns itself with the individual alienation from his

noble status, and Modern tragedy deals with social injustice of man to fellow man. Bopape goes on to indicate that for tragedy to have effective tragic effect, it involves four aspects, namely, the world, an action of a certain seriousness and magnitude as well as the hero and grave suffering.

The concept 'world' in this context is used to refer to man's physical and spiritual environment, and, it is a platform on which tragedy occurs. Bopape (1994:42) asserts in this regard that:

*The friction occurs when man's deepest yearnings to fulfil his aspirations are thwarted by some forces within the world.*

The tragic play **Tšhukudu** is, according to Bopape, an adoption of the Biblical story of Samson and Delilah. Tšhukudu (the counterpart of Samson) is sent by the ancestors into the world to liberate the Matlala tribe from the oppression of the Matebele. This implies that this play portrays a specific period in the traditional Northern Sotho religious setting in which gods or the ancestors play a prominent role in community life. Tribal wars, the use of magic and witchcraft are part and parcel of life in that period.

Meanwhile, tragic action means tragic plot which includes aspects such as tragic cause, tragic conflict, reversal of fortune, recognition of truth and catastrophe. Much more appropriately tragic action is the hero's final action before meeting his fate. The hero is

compelled by certain forces to take a particular kind of action. In the same way, Tšhukudu, the tragic hero is compelled by his mythical privileges to act against social, individual and divine laws, for he falls in love with Selomi, a woman of the opposite camp. Consequently, Tšhukudu reveals his secret of his strength to his lover, an act which leads to his downfall.

Bopape points out that Aristotle recommends a particular type of person as an ideal hero for tragedy. A tragic hero, according to Aristotle should not be a perfect or virtuous man who falls from the position of greatness into nothingness, for, such a man will produce neither pity nor fear. Furthermore, the tragic hero should not be a bad man passing from adversity to prosperity since this can neither produce the feeling of pity nor fear. Moreso the change of fortune should not be the downfall of the utter villain since that may not stir up the true tragic sentiments on the part of the audience.

Bopape goes on to divide the hero's personal qualities into positive and negative ones. With regard to positive qualities of Tšhukudu, the tragic hero, he describes him as 'a gift from ancestors' who is sent into the world to protect the Matlala people from Matebele attacks. Tšhukudu is portrayed as a mythological figure endowed with great strength. In addition to such positive qualities, he is a brave man. On the other hand, Tšhukudu is devoid of ultimate perfection. The flaw in his character is that he is stubborn and arrogant and that he has an abominable lust for beautiful women. These negative qualities which are a flaw in his character precipitate his fall from the position of dignity into nothingness.

The tragic theme in **Tšhukudu** is still relevant today in socio-economic and political spheres since it is a direct comment on the problem caused by tribal differences facing modern nations in Africa. Nations have always divided themselves into tribal groups, and are full of suspicion, mistrust and hatred. They are always in conflict towards one another on the basis of tribalism. And, all these flaws are partly responsible for human suffering, affliction, unhappiness and sorrows of existence.

The world, the tragic action, the tragic hero, dramatic language as well as suffering are elements of tragedy that Bopape considers in his investigation of the nature of tragedy as it manifests itself in Northern Sotho tragic texts. He also cites three major tragic modes, namely, the Greek mode, Renaissance mode and Modern mode, in which case each one of these modes has its own distinctive historical expression. **Tšhukudu** is admittedly a tragic work of art whose theme depicts the modern African socio-economic and political life.

## 1.2 **ARISTOTLE'S VIEWS ON TRAGEDY**

Aristotle first describes the nature of tragedy which this research project shall define later. Besides the nature of tragedy he describes its constituent parts: plot, character, diction, thought, spectacle and song. With regard to plot he insists that it must have a beginning, a middle and an end. He also discusses the organic unity of the plot. He introduces technical terms such as 'reversal', 'discovery', and 'calamity'. In addition to this, he associates pity and fear with tragedy.

Tragedy, according to Aristotle (1985:39)

*... is a presentation of an action that is worth serious attention, complete in itself, and of some amplitude; in language enriched by a variety of artistic devices appropriate to several parts of the play; presented in the form of action, not narration; by means of pity and fear bringing about purgation of such emotions.*

Aristotle seems to stress the idea that noble deeds that a great man does deserve serious attention whereas pity and fear stem from the reversal of the great man's fortune. What Aristotle calls 'the error of judgement' on the part of the tragic hero is partly responsible for his downfall which is pitied and feared by the audience. Pity and fear emanate from the feelings that one may as well end up in similar misfortune.

Another point to note is that 'discovery', 'reversal', and 'recognition' are the constituents of a tragic plot. And, in this regard Aristotle (1985:42) says:

*A plot does not possess unity as some people suppose, merely because it is about one man. Many things, countless things indeed, may happen to one man, and some of them will not contribute to any kind of unity; and similarly he may carry out many actions from which no single unified action will emerge.*

The plot of a play should, according to Aristotle, be the representation of an action, must represent it in a unified whole. If any one of the 'incidents is taken away, the effect of wholeness, as he puts it, 'will be seriously disrupted'.

Aristotle goes on to define what he terms 'reversal', 'discovery' and 'calamity'. In his description of 'reversal' he indicates that this is a change from prosperity to misery, and a change from happiness to sadness. 'Reversal' is accompanied by 'discovery' which is a change from ignorance to knowledge. Such a change leads either to love or to hatred between persons destined for good or ill-fortune.

Calamity, according to Aristotle (1985:47)

*... is an action of a destructive or painful nature such as death openly presented, excessive suffering, wounding and the life.*

Peculiar to tragedy, Aristotle maintains that there should be 'pity' and 'fear'. The audience should shudder with fear and pity as a result of the tragic action. Tragic pleasure is, therefore, associated with pity and fear. Death can be regarded as fearful and pitiable if it involves people who are neither entirely too bad nor too good. The audience feel pity and fear for the tragic hero who is befallen by disaster or calamity.

The seriousness and solemnity of action is, according to Aristotle, peculiar to tragedy. In addition to these are elements such as discovery, reversal, recognition calamity and purgation of emotion. Tragic dramatist have notably throughout the tragic modes when writing the tragic plays conform in one way or another to this Aristotle's conception of tragedy.

### 1.3 SUMMARY

An analysis of criticism of tragedy in various periods reveals that tragedy can be conveniently classified into three tragic modes, namely the Greek mode, the Renaissance mode as well as the Modern mode. The Greek mode is basically divine whereas the Renaissance mode is predominantly noble. A modern tragedy in turn is basically social since it deals with the social injustice of man towards his fellow man. In the same way Milubi's tragedy is admittedly modern and it deals with human suffering and sorrows of existence.

Meanwhile, Tshamano's study of Radio Drama reveals that Radio Drama is a sub-genre in itself. Such drama reflects society objectively and it portrays the realities of Africa, a continent which has been influenced by Western or Christian civilization.

The analysis of a Northern Sotho tragic play, **Tšhukudu**, by Bopape, reveals that the playwright has indeed written a tragic text in which the following tragic aspects are fulfilled, namely; the world, the tragic action, the tragic hero, dramatic language as well as suffering.

The technical terms that Aristotle introduces, namely, 'tragic plot', 'reversal', 'recognition', 'discovery' and 'calamity' have played a large part in all the tragic modes, from the Greek tragedy to the Modern tragedy. By introducing such terms Aristotle's main intention is seemingly to describe and define what appears to have been effective in the works of the best poets and playwrights.

## CHAPTER TWO

### 2. INTRODUCTION

The aim of this chapter is to give a brief outline of the story of the tragic plays of N.A. Milubi. In this study the following plays will receive attention, namely, **Ndi Mitodzi Muni**, **Mukosi wa Lufu**, **Madombini a Ngoho** and **Khoro dzi sa Dzhenelani**.

Furthermore, the literary concept tragedy and modern tragedy will be described as outlined by different authors. Also, a survey of tragedy will be made from African perspective, in which case tragic literary works of art of the following modern African writers will be analyzed; namely, Chinua Achebe, Peter Abrahams, Mongo Beti, Dambudzo Marechera and James Ngugi.

#### 2.1 NDI MITODZI MUNI

**Ndi Mitodzi Muni** is a tragic play of which the theme and plot is centred around corruption, bribery, nepotism, favouritism and in the end the damnation of Itani the tragic hero.

Itani, the protagonist in **Ndi Mitodzi Muni**, is an ordinary layman whose excessive ambition to become rich, powerful and honourable perpetuate his fall from the position of greatness into nothingness.

The plot of a play should, according to Aristotle, be the representation of an action, must represent it in a unified whole. If any one of the 'incidents is taken away, the effect of wholeness, as he puts it, 'will be seriously disrupted'.

Aristotle goes on to define what he terms 'reversal', 'discovery' and 'calamity'. In his description of 'reversal' he indicates that this is a change from prosperity to misery, and a change from happiness to sadness. 'Reversal' is accompanied by 'discovery' which is a change from ignorance to knowledge. Such a change leads either to love or to hatred between persons destined for good or ill-fortune.

Calamity, according to Aristotle (1985:47)

*... is an action of a destructive or painful nature such as death openly presented, excessive suffering, wounding and the life.*

Peculiar to tragedy, Aristotle maintains that there should be 'pity' and 'fear'. The audience should shudder with fear and pity as a result of the tragic action. Tragic pleasure is, therefore, associated with pity and fear. Death can be regarded as fearful and pitiable if it involves people who are neither entirely too bad nor too good. The audience feel pity and fear for the tragic hero who is befallen by disaster or calamity.

apart by what is sometimes referred to as the Western wind, i.e. Western or Christian civilization. The tragic consequences of polygamism is the theme of this tragic literary work of art.

Notably, according to the African customs there is nothing immoral in being a polygamist. An African man marries as many women as they are capable of supporting themselves. Mawela, a polygamist, seems to be a confused African caught up in the dilemma of reconciling the extremes of two cultural values. He marries Masindi, his first wife, according to customary law whereas his second wife Maria is married according to the Western tradition.

Masindi complains, from the exposition, about Mawela, her husband, that he has been neglecting her and her children, and that he gives more consideration to Maria his second wife. She is, as a result deeply grieved that she sometimes talks to herself. What she tells the audience reveals that **'Mukosi wa Lufu'** is a drama of poverty, hatred, jealousy and suspicion.

Maria, a westernized wife of Mawela is always quarrelsome. She keeps reminding her husband that he should always bear it in mind that he has married her according to the Western way and that they have signed a marriage contract, and that their marriage is the one of community of property.

Mawela's marriage to Maria is characterised by constant quarrels. Maria's aggressive tendency is a problem to both Mawela and Masindi. The family of Mawela is split into two camps. Masindi is in league with her children while Maria is also in league with her children. Mawela remains neutral. What he attempts to do is to reconcile the parties but is not successful.

Meanwhile, Maria accuses Masindi of being a witch. Ndivhuho, Masindi's daughter quarrels with Itani, who is Maria's child. Itani hurls at Ndivhuho all sorts of insults. She tells Ndivhuho that her mother is an illiterate person and a witch whereas her mother is educated and that she is a teacher.

As the plot unfolds, Lowani, Maria's newly born baby dies. Masindi is suspected of having bewitched Lowani. In this case, the conflict intensifies. Mawela, in an attempt to save Lowani's life, goes to the extent of visiting a traditional healer despite the fact that he claims to be a Christian.

Eventually, Maria hires an assassin to murder Masindi. Sambula, the assassin, sets the house in which Masindi is sleeping alight. Masindi is burnt to death. This tragic death is so terrible that it fills the reader with the feeling of terror, pity, fear and grief.

### 2.3 KHORO DZI SA DZHENELANI

**Khoro dzi sa Dzhenelani** is one of Milubi's tragic art works in which a clash between Christian religion and Venda tribal customs and religion is depicted. **Khoro dzi sa Dzhenelani** can literally be translated as 'Courts that shall not interfere with each other'.

Tshibovhola, the tragic hero, is vehemently opposed to the idea that people should go to the initiation schools as the paramount chief instructs. From the beginning, Thavha, the paramount chief is giving orders to his subjects that everybody must go to an initiation school. He tells the gathering that all those who have never been there including everybody in public schools should be captured and taken there.

Meanwhile, Tshibovhola the tragic hero, is a minister of Christian religion. In opposition to the instruction of the paramount chief he tells the congregation that they are surrounded by darkness and that the church is out to fight this darkness. Tshibovhola warns the members of the congregation that anybody who takes his or her child to an initiation school shall be excommunicated from the church, and that he shall never stop at anything before he carries out his threat.

The conflict escalates to a climax. Tshibovhola chokes and suffocates with hate, anger and indignation against the tribal rituals of his own tribe. Tshibovhola in this instance represents an instrument of Western and Christian civilization in confrontation with African culture.

The worst part of the whole episode, Polosi, who is Tshibovhola's son, absconds to an initiation school. And, in reaction to this Tshibovhola declares that he will have absolutely nothing to do with his son Polosi, and that neither shall he have anything to do with the whole affair.

And, the tragic part of the whole story, Murendeni, who is Tshibovhola's daughter absconds to '*domba*' initiation school. The matter is reported to Tshibovhola that his daughter has not been admitted to the '*domba*' initiation school because she has been found to be pregnant. Nndwakhulu, the son of the paramount chief is responsible for the pregnancy. The royal family has no objections if Nndwakhulu is married to Murendeni, on condition that Murendeni undergoes all the tribal rituals.

In an attempt to solve the problem, Tshibovhola bribes the royal family into giving the approval that Nndwakhulu and Murendeni get married the Western way, and that they should sign a marriage contract. The royal family refuses the bribery.

Tshibovhola cunningly turns to other means of having his daughter Murendeni married. Alternatively, he wants his daughter to be married by her cousin and that the two sign a marriage contract secretly. Tshibovhola, the tragic hero, embezzles the church funds to finance the wedding ceremony.

The conflict escalates to a climax when the royal family disrupts the wedding ceremony. Vhakoma tells Tshibovhola that he is nothing better than a heathen, and that he will never enter the kingdom of Heaven.

This catastrophic ending depicts a tragic situation whereby Christian religion is in conflict with Venda religion and rituals. The play depicts Tshibovhola as a deceiver and a vile traitor of his own religion.

#### 2.4 MADOMBINI A NGOHO

**Madombini a Ngoho** can be literally translated as 'In the ripe strawberries of truth'. **Madombini a Ngoho** is apparently, Milubi's literary tragic art work which is the product of the tragic experience of the upheaval of the South African Blacks against the existing policy of racial inequality and segregation. Fhedzi, the protagonist speaks the truth only, and, he stands for the truth only.

There are political riots all over the country. From exposition police are in confrontation with the rioting mob. There are shootings. Tear gas bombs are thrown to scatter the rioting mob. Fhedzi is regarded as an instigator and an agitator of the mob. He is betrayed by his friend Khavhe for a lump-sum of money. Dithu, the then bureaucrat, tries to bribe Fhedzi into becoming a conformist. Fhedzi refuses the bribe. He is detained without trial.

Characters in **Madombini a Ngoho** are divided into two factions. There are Christian political activists resisting oppression and repression by the then system of government. Khavhe, together with his fellow bureaucrats and their supporters, hold a series of meetings to decide on the fate of the political activists. Khavhe secretly approaches Annah, who is Fhedzi's wife and bribes her into joining him in betraying the political activists. Annah refuses the bribe. Raina also refuses the bribe. Mukandanganwi, the political activist, is also arrested and detained without trial.

In Act IV Scene III, Fhedzi is seen with Dithu and Dada, a prison authority and prison guard. He is compelled to sign a blank sheet of paper which he refuses to do. Consequently, Fhedzi is tortured to death, and his body is carried away.

Riots escalate. The rioting mob goes on rampage. In his soliloquy Khavhe is seen not only regretting his actions but repenting. His repentance comes too late. The rampaging mob captures him and necklaces him. He is first doused with petrol. A tyre is put around his neck and then set alight.

Remarkably, **Madombini a Ngoho** is a political tragedy whereby the tragic hero dies or is killed for his political convictions.

## 2.5 THE DEFINITION OF TRAGEDY

It is stated in the **Encyclopaedia Britannica** (1974:580) that:

*Although the word tragedy is often used loosely to describe any sort of disaster or misfortune, it more precisely refers to a work of art usually a play or novel that probe with seriousness questions concerning the role of man in the universe.*

Notably, disaster or misfortune is peculiar to tragedy. Disaster and misfortune that befall man in his daily existence is perpetrated by a flaw either in a man's character himself or the environment in which he finds himself.

Tragedy, therefore, is a literary work of art which mimics life afflictions. Tragic writers single out a salient character, who is referred to as a tragic hero, to represent a character in real life situations. Disaster or misfortune befalls him, and, his misfortune is pitied by the readers or audience, and, they are gripped by the fear of falling into similar misfortunes.

According to Hornby (1986:917) a tragedy is:

*a play for the theatre, cinema, TV of a serious or solemn kind with sad ending; branch of the drama with this kind of play, action, experience, etc. in real life.*

Hornby seems to stress the fact that a literary work of art of serious, or, of solemn kind is what can be termed tragedy. The end of tragedy causes unhappy feelings on the part

of the audience. The solemnity of the action, disaster and misfortune that the tragic hero encounters cause both deep thought and respect.

Therefore, seriousness in a tragic literary art work is what evokes thoughtfulness and earnestness on the part of the audience or readers. Furthermore, tragedy demands serious and earnest consideration from the audience, and it is not merely for amusement, but, for the cleansing of the emotions of the audience as Aristotle supposes.

The solemnity of tragic action as Hornby maintains in his definition of tragedy presupposes that unlike many other literary genres, tragedy is a serious, dignified, formal and impressive work of art which is full of importance. Hornby agrees with Aristotle in the opinion that the ending of tragedy should be sad, catastrophic, and sorrowful to evoke the feeling of pity and fear on the part of the audience.

Fowler et al (1995:1478) defines tragedy as :

*a serious accident, crime or natural catastrophe, a sad event; a calamity; a play in verse or prose dealing with tragic events and with an unhappy ending, especially the downfall of the protagonist, tragic plays as a genre (middle English via Old French 'tragedie' and Latin 'tragoedia', from Greek 'tragoidia', apparently from ['tragoe' 'goat + ōidē 'song']).*

Fowler seems to stress the fact that an unfortunate event especially the one that causes physical, and, or psychological harm or damage can be termed tragedy. A great and sudden disastrous and sad denouement is peculiar to tragic drama. What befalls a protagonist is sorrowful, shameful and pathetic for he falls from prosperity or power to ruin.

Ramaliba, T.Z. et al (1994:26) defines tragedy as follows:

*Likhaulambilu ndi dirama ine ya fhela hu na mpfu, zwithu kana ya fhela ho bvelela zwithu zwine zwa vhaisa mubvumbedzwa-dendele. Nga inwe ndila, likhaulambilu ndi dirama ine ya fhela hu si na dakalo kha dendele.*

*(Tragedy is a drama which ends-up in death, weeping or end up in events that affect the protagonist adversely. In other words, tragedy is a drama which ends up in such a way that the protagonist is left sad.)*

Ramaliba seems to concur with the opinion that a work of art such as drama with a grave and sad ending is what can be termed a tragedy. According to him, death and weeping is peculiar to the denouement of tragic drama. The protagonist is affected adversely by sad events. In the end he falls from prosperity to a state of wretchedness, and, his downfalls is pitied by the readers. Tragedy then can be regarded as a literary work of art, a drama or a novel with grave and important events demanding serious consideration.

Catastrophic, sad or unhappy ending are peculiar to a tragic literary art work. The chief character who is sometimes referred to as the protagonist is the one whom disaster or misfortune befalls, thereby suffering what Aristotle refers to as a reversal of fortune.

In the same way, tragedy is defined by Abrams (1988:189) as follows:

*The term is broadly applied to literary and especially to dramatic representations of serious and important actions which turn out disastrously for the protagonist, or chief character.*

The seriousness and the importance of tragic action which turns out disastrously for the chief character is what can be termed a tragic literary work of art. As Abrams asserts in his definition, these grave and important actions ought to be presented in a dramatic way. The protagonist is the outstanding character around whom all these tragic actions have a direct bearing. A sudden catastrophic and disastrous ending is peculiar to tragedy. The protagonist is either by fate or flaw in his character brought to ruin which feels the audience with the feeling of pity and terror.

Heese and Lawton (1988:115) quote Aristotle as having defined tragedy as:

*the imitation of an action that is serious and also, as having magnitude, complete in itself.*

Heese and Lawton (1988) go on to indicate that tragedy is first analysed by the Greek philosopher, Aristotle. According to him tragic drama has developed in ways that Aristotle could not have foreseen. The tragic hero as Aristotle supposes should be a man of high moral worth and high social standing. Disaster and misfortune that befall him evokes in readers the feeling of pity. What evokes pity and fear is that the tragic hero, according to Aristotle, should not be all that evil nor too good. He is a character between the two extremes.

Peculiar to the modern tragedy is the antihero or antiheroine who according to Heese and Lawton is a simple peasant, a salesman, a tramp or an ordinary man in the street. Unlike in Ancient times whereby tragedy is concerned with the experience of people of high estate, tragic experience befalls common men. But the fact remains that this kind of literary art work ends up in catastrophe and death.

From all these explanations, it can be assumed that tragedy is a literary work of art which mimics with high seriousness, grave and important actions, events or experience that concerns man in his existence. Flaw in man's character or in the environment in which he finds himself is partly responsible for his sorrows and affliction of existence. The tragic hero or the protagonist is the chief character in tragic literary art work who falls from prosperity to ruin. His downfall is pitied by the audience who in turn are gripped with the terror and fear of finding themselves in similar circumstances.

## 2.6 TRAGEDY FROM AN AFRICAN PERSPECTIVE

In this section the study makes a survey of the following African writers; namely, Peter Abrahams, Chinua Achebe, Mongo Beti, Dambudzo Marechera and Ngugi wa Thiongo. An outline of the elements of tragedy as they manifest themselves in the works of these literary artists is made.

### 2.6.1 Peter Abrahams: Mine Boy

This art work of Peter Abrahams, a South African writer depicts the tragic experience of the life of Blacks in South African townships during the apartheid era. Xuma, a young man from the north goes to the urban area for the first time to seek employment. He finds a place to stay in the township. He is employed in the mine. He works with White people. He falls in love with a learned girl. He struggles to survive in all these hazardous situations which are characterised by a number of tragic experiences of which Peter Abrahams blames in his book, the then existing social injustice which is the cause of the sufferings of the Blacks in the South African townships.

To illustrate this argument Peter Abrahams (1992:177) writes:

*White people did not have to crowd into place and sit on top of each other. They had bigger rooms. Not just one little room. They had nice eating houses in almost every street of the corner.*

In this way Peter Abrahams depicts sufferings and life affliction of the people living in the townships. Peter Abrahams goes on to portray hardships in the townships through Eliza whose personality is split into two as a result of the clash of two cultural values namely, Western culture and African culture.

Eliza is a qualified female teacher in love with Xuma. She is always sad because she wishes she were a white person. In this regard, Peter Abrahams (1992:60) says:

*I want to be like the white people and go where they go and do the things they do and I am black. I cannot help it. Inside I am not black and I do not want to be a black person. I want to be like they are you understand, Xuma.*

The tragic part of this story is that at this stage human dignity is violated by the policy of racial inequality and segregation.

Peter Abrahams goes on to illustrate in words the sad and melancholic mood prevailing in these people's hearts. In this regard Abrahams (1992:172) writes:

*You do not know how it feels to be stopped by a policeman in the street. You go where you like. You do not know how it feels when they say: 'get out'. White people only.*

The ending of Abrahams work of art is quite catastrophic. A strike breaks out in the mines which leaves some people seriously injured and some even lost their jobs. The following words illustrate this catastrophic sad ending as written by Abrahams (1992:181):

*"Come on paddy"! a whiteman called. It's all very well to play with them sometimes but we must show this kaffirs where they belong. Come on!*

In the midst of this pandemonium Paddy, a whiteman, sympathizes with the strikers. Contrary to what is said above he says:

*Zuma is right, they pay you a little. They don't care whether you risk your lives! Why is it so? Is not the blood of the black man red like that of a whiteman?*

This sad ending illustrates the sad and melancholic mood of the people suffering the affliction of oppression, and racial segregation.

### **2.6.2 Chinua Achebe: *Things Fall Apart***

In this novel, Chinua Achebe depicts the assassination of African culture by Western culture or Christian civilization.

Okonkwo, the tragic hero is an ordinary man of the Umuofia tribe who gradually rises to fame. But, due to his pride and arrogance he falls from the position of greatness into oblivion. And, the worst part of the whole episode, he commits suicide.

Okonkwo represents African culture so that his death symbolizes the death of African culture. Right from exposition, he is presented as a brave man who wins a fearful fight by throwing down Amalinze, the great wrestler, who for seven years has never been beaten. In this manner Okonkwo rises to fame. Even in battles he proves himself a brave man. His own people treat him with honour and respect.

Chinua Achebe goes on to illustrate the manner in which an African family is ruled by its landlord. Okonkwo rules his family with an iron hand. There is peace and harmony in his household. He is granted the custody of Ikemefuna, a lad who is brought from Mbaino to Umuofia clan as a recompensation to replace Ogbuefi, Udo's wife who is murdered by the Mbaino clan.

Okonkwo takes part in the ritual murder of Ikemefuna, an act which annoys the gods. Okonkwo accidentally kills a kinsman during the festival. This brings about his reversal of fortune. He is banned from Umuofia. He flees to Mbata, his motherland and a village just beyond the borders of Mbaino.

When Okonkwo is in exile a whiteman comes to Umuofia for the first time. These were missionaries who build their church, win a handful of converts and also send the evangelists to the surrounding towns and villages. In this manner African culture, religion and tribal rituals are threatened by the Western or Christian civilization.

The conflict escalates when some people resist the process of being converted into Christians. Okonkwo is one of the non-conformists. He is vehemently opposed to Christian religion. He looks forward to the day when these missionaries should be chased out off the village or be whipped out.

The irony of the whole story, Okonkwo's son Nwoye is converted into a Christian. Okonkwo chokes and suffocates with hate, anger and indignation. He regards his son Nwoye as an outcast.

Enock, a Christian murders an 'egwugwu'. There is a clan uprising. They set the church alight and chase away the Christian. This leads to a direct confrontation between the elderly leaders of the Umuofia clan and the District Commissioner. They are arrested and released on bail of hundred bags of cowries.

A mass meeting is held to decide what to do about the humiliation they are undergoing. While they are busy having a meeting the head messenger is sent to stop the meeting. Okonkwo hacks him to death with his machet and thereafter hangs himself.

In this case, Okonkwo, the tragic hero has risen from the position of insignificance into greatness, and thereafter, falls from the position of dignity into nothingness. He dies an undignified death. His clansmen regard his body as evil. That is why they would not even dare to touch his body. Only strangers may touch it.

### 2.6.3 Mongo Beti: **The Poor Christ of Bomba**

Reverend Father Superior Drumont, a tragic hero, is a priest of the Catholic Mission of Bomba in Mongo Beti's **The Poor Christ of Bomba**. He is out to convert Africans into Christians. He does not find it easy. Africans are deep-rooted in their own African religion. African Christian converts would go out of their way to consult well-known sorcerers. And even the best Christian amongst his converts make use of sorcerers in many affairs.

A tragic parallel story in **The Poor Christ of Bomba** is that of the girls kept in the mission to prepare them for Christian marriage. They live together in women's camp called Sixa. As the plot unfolds, it becomes clear that these girls are not kept in such a camp for the benefit of their souls, but rather for the good of the mission building programme. The local churchmen are misusing the girls for their own purposes. They molest them. They sleep around with them so that at the end almost all of them contract venereal diseases. And, an act which leads to the closure of the camp.

**The Poor Christ of Bomba** , is a work of art in which African characters are taken straight from life. African characters are typically Africans who are in a dilemma of reconciling their African religion and tribal customs with Christianity but all this is in vain. Almost all Christians are flirting with witchcraft or polygamy.

Reverend Father Superior Drumont the tragic hero finds himself in confrontation with the local chiefs. Reverend Father Superior Drumont forbids the local people to dance their traditional dance in respect of Christian rituals. The chief hurls insults on him. He threatens to kill him. But the fact is, he is dealing with a white man, who is defying them because he is sure of the support of his colonial masters.

Vidal, the local Administrator warns Reverend Father Superior Drumont that they should not impose the Western customs upon the Africans. And in this regard Beti (1971:150) writes a conversation between Vidal, the Administrator, and Father Superior Drumont:

*These people worshipped God without our help. What matters if they worshipped after their own fashion - by eating one another, or by dancing in the moonlight, or by wearing charms around their necks? Why do we insist on imposing our customs upon them?*

Meanwhile, girls that are kept in a camp in preparation for Christian marriage are being abused and misused. Most of them leave the camp being pregnant on the eve of their marriages. Besides this there is syphilis in the whole camp spread by the local church

men. A district surgeon is summoned to the camp to treat the girls of the venereal disease. The ending is catastrophic. Some of the girls run away, refusing to be examined by the doctor. To Reverend Father Superior Drumont, this is very scandalous and frustrating. He has no alternative other than to close down the Catholic Mission of Bomba and go back to his own country overseas with his ambitions and expectations shuttered.

#### 2.6.4 Dambudzo Marechera: **Black Sunlight**

In his **Black Sunlight** Dambudzo Marechera elaborates on politically motivated violence in one of the African states under the rule of their colonial masters.

Christian, a tragic hero, is the holder of an Oxford University degree and, is in love with a white woman, Blanche Goodfather. The local chief is vehemently opposed to this move. Christian is arrested, interrogated and tortured for it. He is put in a cell from which he escapes to go and join an organization which is out to make the whole country ungovernable. There are riots everywhere in the country or in towns. Bombs are going off. There are explosions everywhere. Describing this situation, Dambudzo Marechera (1980:27) writes:

*I had been up since the early hours of the morning when the bomb went off. It had been followed by series of explosions in different parts of the town. All of a sudden a screaming hungry horde was pouring through the streets, smashing windows and looting and attacking any sign of authority*

*whether human or inanimate. It was a blow the whole town  
had tensed up for long ago.*

Christian, a tragic hero together with other minor characters such as Kathrine Nick, Susan and Stephen are in league against the state. They are conspirators who conspire. They conspire to plant a bomb of which they do. The huge shattering sound explodes simultaneously from three deafening blasts, catapulting dangerous debris in all direction. It was the so-called Black Sunlight Organization operating underground. And, it has never been apprehended by neither the Special Branch nor the Security Forces.

Dambudzo Marechera ironically presents in his work of art, violence to illustrate a situation where human rights are being violated. Violence in this instance is relative. It is important only to those in direct and emotional contact with it. According to Dambudzo Marechera, there is a greater violence, that of imagination. What causes life affliction is that people are constantly waging against each other a furious battle and that in every instance of people's life there is always a struggle against something.

#### **2.6.5 Ngugi wa Thiongo's: Devil on the Cross**

Ngugi wa Thiongo's wrote **Devil on the Cross** whilst in detention. He has been detained without trial by a government hoping to silence him. **Devil on the Cross** can be regarded as a work of art born out of suffering. Human affairs, criticism of social evils and patriotism are dealt with on a realistic and imaginative level at the same time.

Wariinga, the tragic heroine is an ordinary African girl. Like many other African school girls, she falls pregnant. A married rich old man is responsible for the pregnancy. But, he denies responsibility. Having realized that she is being rejected, she attempts suicide but is rescued. Wariinga is given an invitation card to attend the so-called 'a competition to select seven experts in Modern Theft and Robbery'. Theft and robbery in this case refers to the capitalists, the rich, the imperialists, the millionaires, the billionaires, and the multi-billionaires or, when the rich man becomes more of millionaire the more the poor man becomes more poorer. And, the poor man is one who suffers from poverty whereas the rich man lives in luxury, and more so at the expense of a poor man's labour. The poor man feels the pain and realizes reality. He uprises. The capitalist is there to suppress any form of uprising. And with his guns blazing he puts down the revolt. But the masses and the workers are powerful enough to overpower the devil, the imperialist. They capture him and crucify him.

Amongst those who enter the competition of Modern Theft and Robbery are Gitutu wa Gataanguru, Kihaahu wa Gatheeca and Mwireri wa Mukiraai.

Gitutu wa Gataanguru is a wealthy man. He gives testimony of how he manages to become a very rich man, and in his testimony he states that he has started as a court clerk and an interpreter. His father has been one of the elders who has been used by the colonialists in the purges of the Mau Mau followers. In this regard Ngugi (1987:102) presents Gataanguru as saying:

*Learn from the whites, and you will never go wrong. The white man believes that there is no business to beat than that of theft and robbery. I talk frankly. The white man came to this country holding the Bible in his left hand and a gun in his right. He stole the people's cattle and goats under the cover of fines and taxes. He robbed people of the labour of their hands.*

Gitutu wa Gataanguru goes on to indicate that he has run to his European benefactor for loans. He buys land at a cheap price and sells it to the poor at a higher price for profit. And, in this manner he prospers, until he becomes a millionaire. In this instance Gitutu is trying to illustrate a point that in order to become rich one does not have to labour or sweat for it. Much more appropriately one has to be cunning to become rich. Amassing wealth is nothing better than theft and robbery. He believes that in order to become rich one must exploit the hunger and thirst of the toiling masses. In this regard Ngugi (1987:104) writes:

*Hunger multiplied by thirst - what's the answer? I took out a pen and the paper of the heart, and I calculated thus:*

*Hunger x thirst = Famine.*

*Famine among the masses = wealth for a man of cunning.*

Kihaahu wa Gatheeca who is also a very rich man gives his testimony on how he managed to become a multi-millionaire. He started as a teacher. But as time went on he left

teaching to start the so-called Modern-Day Nursery School. He employs an old white woman to administer the school. People feel good about it. They bring their children to the school which is eventually full to a high capacity. Each child pays 2 500 shillings a month. He joins politics. He campaigns for a seat in Parliament. He hires gangsters to get rid of his opponents and rivals. He wins the vote. He takes the seat in Parliament. He is elected chairman of the Iciciri country Council's Housing Committee. The Committee is responsible for the construction and distribution of Council houses and also for allocating industrial and business plots to individuals or companies. The company wins the tender for a small back-hander of about 2 000,000 shillings. And he, Kihaahu wa Gatheeca, becomes a millionaire.

Mwireri wa Mukiraaui also gives his testimony on how he has struggled to become a rich man but failed. He has started as a member of an International Planned Parenthood Association. He is the holder of four degrees, namely: B.Sc (E Con Mark); B. Comm (NRB), M.A. (Bus Admin) (Harvard USA); MRSocIBM. Mwireri wa Mukiraaui does not believe in foreign ideology. But he believes in the ideology of a modern theft and robbery. He is not so very rich. Unlike other rich men who have attended the competition, and also, who drive very handsome and expensive cars, Mwireri wa Mukiraaui drives a Peugeot 504. He indicates to the audience that since he believes in the god of modern theft and the lord of modern robbery he also believes that all the nations and countries that have made progress and have contributed to modern civilization have passed through the stage of exploitation.

In his testimony Mwereri wa Mukirai states as Ngugi (1987:166) presents him:

*Sometimes these foreign thieves and robbers build stores and granaries in the country they loot, and they employ a few of the thieves there to look after them. What all that mean is this: when foreigners such as the ones we have here come to our land and build stores and granaries, their plan is simply to rob our country and take the spoils back to Japan, Europe and America.*

Mwireri wa Mukirai goes on to indicate that in his struggle for survival he has set up a factory for manufacturing cooking oil from wild spinach. When he goes to sell the oil, he finds the market completely flooded with cooking oil imported by foreign owned companies. And to add insult to injury, they cut the price of their oil. He is on the verge of bankruptcy. He, Mwireri wa Mukirai, sells the factory and all the machinery. They are bought by foreigners.

After having given his testimony people feel Mwireri wa Mukirai has insulted them despite the fact that he is talking the truth. Mwireri wa Mukirai dies tragically that evening. He is murdered by the capitalists for having spoken the truth.

The ending is tragic and catastrophic. The cave in which the competition on Modern Theft and Robbery is held is invaded by a mob of the working masses. All those who are capitalists are assaulted or murdered.

Meanwhile Wariinga is in love with Gatuiria the son of the Rich Old Man who has once been in love with Wariinga. The Rich Old Man is shot cold-bloodedly by Wariinga on the wedding day. The Rich Old Man is discovered to be the father of Wariinga's child. The Rich Old Man has been pursuing Wariinga to give up the idea of getting married to Gatuiria, his son. And in this manner the whole affair ends up tragically and catastrophically.

## 2.7 SUMMARY

Different definitions of tragedy according to different authors reveal that tragedy is a literary art work which penetrates and explores with earnestness questions concerning the role of man in the universe. Disaster, misfortune and suffering that befall man are perpetrated either by a flaw in him or his environment. Tragedy imitates this sufferings and sorrows of existence.

Solemnity of the tragic action, and also, the reversal of fortune that the protagonist suffer evokes from the reader the feeling of pity and fear of falling into the same predicament. Great deeds that a great man does deserve serious attention. He falls from prosperity to ruin, he changes from happiness to sadness and he changes from ignorance to knowledge.

A survey of tragedy from an African perspective has been made. Peter Abrahams has written **Mine Boy** which is a criticism of the social and political injustices experienced

by Blacks in South African townships. Xuma the tragic hero represents an ordinary man in the street, a layman and a labourer whose sorrows of existence is due to the violation of basic human rights.

Chinua Achebe on the one hand depicts the violation and corruption of African culture by the Christian or Western civilization. This he does in '**Things Fall Apart**' and '**Arrow of God**'. On the other hand Mongo Beti depicts in his '**The Poor Christ of Bomba**' a situation where Christian religion is in confrontation with African religion and tribal rituals. The failure to convert Africans into real Christians, leaves Father Drumont the tragic hero a frustrated man who decides to close the mission.

Dambudzo Marechera's '**Black Sunlight**', like Ngugi wa Thiong'o's '**Devil on the Cross**' is a political tragedy. People die for their political convictions, and, some are victims of political riots and violence. These tragic art works are evidently the product of suffering and a reaction against the social evils of colonialism, neocolonialism, and capitalism in Africa.

## CHAPTER THREE

### 3. ELEMENTS OF TRAGEDY

The aim of this chapter is to analyze critically elements of tragedy in Milubi's tragic plays, namely; **Ndi Mitodzi Muni**, **Mukosi wa Lufu**, **Madombini a Ngoho** and **Khoro dzi sa Dzhenelani**. Elements of tragedy to be explicated include, inter alia, reversal or recognition, solemnity of action, discovery, hamartia and hubris.

#### 3.1 REVERSAL

Reversal is, according to Aristotle (1965:46):

*a change from one state of affairs to its opposite.*

As the concept reversal is derived from the verb 'reverse', Fowler & Fowler (1995:1179) define it as:

*The opposite or contrary, the contrary of the usual manner, an occurrence of misfortune; a disaster especially a defeat in battle.*

Regarding the concept reversal Abrams (1988:141) writes:

*The reversal frequently depends on a discovery (in Aristotle's Greek term, anagnorisis). This is the recognition by the protagonist of something of great importance hitherto unknown to him or to her.*

Ever since the time of Aristotle tragic literary artists have portrayed their tragic heroes in such a manner that they change from fortune to misfortune, just as much as they change from happiness to misery.

In the same way Milubi portrays in his play, **Ndi Mitodzi Muni**, Itani, the chief character as someone who moves from a state of insignificance to a very important person. From exposition Itani is presented as an ordinary poor man suffering from poverty and oppression. In this regard Milubi (1985) presents Itani as saying:

*Itani: Vha vhona zwi zwithu-de zwine afha mushumoni ra  
vhulawa nga u dobedza makatshi vha si gathi vha  
tshi khou fa nga u kukuṭa nga masaga? U ḽa vha ri  
u ḽa vha fhedza nga u rahela kule, ngeno riṅe  
vhaḽwe ri tshi ri u ḽa ṅowa dza sala dzi tshi lila.  
Nangoho ndi ngoho a si na tshawe ndi dzadza ḽine  
tshaḽo ha vha u kandekanywa nga nnyi na nnyi.*

(Milubi, 1985:5)

*(Itani: What do you think about what is happening here at  
work, where we are getting almost nothing whereas  
the chosen few are earning a lot of money? They*

*eat, fill their stomachs and kick away food whereas we are starving. Surely, it is true the have-nots are just like a tattered cloth which should be trampled by everybody.)*

By improving his academic qualifications Itani moves from one state of affair to another.

His scholastic achievement earns him honour and admiration. He is now a wealthy man living in luxury. But the flaw in his character, i.e. accepting bribe and molesting women, brings about his reversal of fortune. He changes from happiness to misery, for, in the end he is brutally hacked to death.

In **Mukosi wa Lufu** reversal, as an element of tragedy is presented in such a manner that Masindi the tragic heroine does not actually move from one state of affair to its opposite. From exposition events are always turning out disastrously for her. She moves from bad to worse until she is murdered in a brutal manner.

In the same way Fhedzi the protagonist in **Madombini a Ngo** , never experiences happiness. He is arrested, detained, tortured and ultimately killed.

Another classic example of reversal is noticeable in Milubi's **Khoro dzi sa Dzhenelani** whereby Tshibovhola, a minister of Christian religion suddenly behaves in a manner that does not conform to Christianity. Instead of remaining faithful and straightforward before the eyes of the congregation, he becomes deceptive and faithless and he is abhorred by his fellow churchmen. In the end Tshibovhola appears to be nothing better than a heathen.

### 3.2 DISCOVERY

Discovery, according to Aristotle (1965:46) is:

*A change from ignorance to knowledge, and it leads either to love or to hatred between the persons destined for good or ill-fortune.*

In **Ndi Mitodzi Muni** the denouement involves discovery in the tragic hero's fortune. When Itani is being slain by Maraga, he starts to realize that what he has been doing is unfair and unjust to other people. He apologetically pleads for mercy. In this regard Itani says:

*Itani: Vho-Maraga, vha songo vhuya vha mbulaha. Ndi do vha fha tshiwe na tshiwe tshine vha ta. Tshelede yanga yothe, na Mamvuka vha do vhuisiwa vha da vha shuma fhano dziofisini.*

(Milubi, 1985:101)

*(Itani: Mr Maraga, do not kill me. I will give you everything or anything you want including all my money, and you will be transferred from Mamvuka back home to work in these offices.)*

There is, likewise, discovery as an element of tragedy in **Mukosi wa Lufu** which of course occurs to Mawela who is disputably not the chief character of the play. Mawela

may not have foreseen the tragic consequences of being a polygamist. But as the plot unfolds the conflict escalates and he eventually becomes aware of the fact that he is, as a result of being a polygamist, living in misery and sorrow. In this regard Milubi (1986) presents Mawela as saying:

*Mawela:*

*(Vha tshi ambela mbiluni) Muḏi wanga ndi hone u tshi khou kumuluwa sa vhulimbo, vhune u kumuluwa vhu si tsha fasha. Vhutshilo ndi hone vhu tshi vho thoma u gonya zwivhanga u dzida hu vho pfala kule na tsini. Nga vhanna.*

(Milubi, 1986:37)

*Mawela:*

*(Talking in soliloquy) My household is being dismantled like a bird trap that shall never trap the birds any longer. Life is beginning to go uphill, the groaning is heard far and near. My dear people!)*

Milubi also presents in his tragic play **Khoro dzi sa Dzhenelani**, Tshibovhola the protagonist and a pastor of Christian Church as a tragic hero who suffers a shock of recognition when he finds that people he believes to be Christians are getting themselves involved in tribal and ritual ceremonies. The following conversation illustrates this:

*Munna: (U a takuwa) Vhafunzi, zwino avha vhane vha vho divhea vho pfuka mulayo wa kereke yashu nga u ya kha zwithu zwa nnda?*

*Tshibovhola: Ndo no ḁi amba uri ane a pjuka mulayo wa Mudzimu nga u ya murunduni kana dombani u ḁo ribwa kerekeni na tshilaleloni. Nga tshino tshifhinga ndi ḁivhadza tshivhidzo nga ha u ribwa fhano kerekeni ha Vho-Jimisi Bababa na vhomakhadzi Vho-Ndiitwani.*

(Milubi, 1996:4)

*(Munna: (He stands up) Pastor, what about those who trespass the law of our church by getting themselves involved in the affairs of the gentiles?*

*Tshibovhola: I have already said that whoever trespasses the law of God by going to an initiation school shall be excommunicated from the church and the holy communion. Right now I announce to this congregation the excommunication of Mr Jimisi Bababa and the great aunt Ndiitwani.)*

Tshibovhola once more suffers a shock of discovery when he finds that his son Polosi and his daughter Murendeni abscond to the initiation schools. When Bababa tells Tshibovhola that his son Polosi is admitted to the initiation school, Tshibovhola is shocked to a point of letting his hymn book drop to the floor. In this regard, Milubi (1996) presents the following characters as saying:

*Bababa: Vhafunzi, vhutshinyi hanga ndi khou vhu ḁivha,  
na vhu vhi hanga ndi khou vhu ḁivha zwavhuḁivhuḁi.  
A re nḁe a tho ngo ḁela u ḁigoḁombola na luthihi.*

*Tshe nda dela tshone ndi u vha vhudza zwauro nwana  
wavho o wela ngomani matsheloni.*

*Tshibovhola: Nwana ufho? (Bugu ya luimbo ya wela  
fhasi).*

*Bababa: Nwana wavho Polosi. O wela matsheloni, nazwino  
mushondwane yo vha i tshi khou mwemwela i tshi ri  
i munna zwino.*

*(Milubi, 1996:15-16)*

*(Bababa: Pastor, I know my iniquities and my sins very  
well. I have not come here to quarrel with you.  
What I have come here for is to inform you that your  
son was admitted to the initiation school this morning.*

*Tshibovhola: Which son again? (The hymn book falls  
down.)*

*Bababa: Your son, Polosi. He was admitted this morning.  
At this very moment the chap is smiling proudly and  
saying now I am a man.)*

Tshibovhola, furthermore, suffers a shock of recognition to discover that his daughter Murendeni has absconded to the 'domba' initiation school and that she is discovered to be pregnant. The following conversation between characters illustrates this argument:

*Ndiitwani: Vhafunzi, vhutshinyi hanga hovhu ho diswaho  
nga u ya dombani u vhu divha ndi tou vhu divha*

zwavhudivhudi. Zwino mafhungo e nda dela one ndi  
haya vhafunzi. Madekwe hangei dombani ndi musi ho  
da n̄wana wavho.

Tshibovhola: N̄wananga ufhio?

Ndiitwani: Onoyu wa khomba hoyu. Zwiḽa u pfi nnyi?

Tshibovhola: Murendeni.

Ndiitwani: Ahaa! khezwo.

(Milubi, 1996:19)

(Ndiitwani: Pastor, my iniquities are of going to the domba initiation school and I know it perfectly very well. Now pastor, what I have come here for is this: Last night your daughter went to the domba initiation school.

Tshibovhola: Which daughter of mine again?

Ndiitwani: The maiden one. By the way who is she?

Tshibovhola: Murendeni.

Ndiitwani: Ahaah! That's it.)

At this point Tshibovhola is to choose between faithfulness and deceitfulness. He chooses to be faithless and unfaithful, and an act which leads to his own self-destruction. For

Tshibovhola resorts to bribe to solve his problem, and he embezzles the church funds. This is an act which leads to his own self-ruin.

### 3.3 HAMARTIA

Hamartia is generally known as the tragic flaw. Regarding tragic flaw Heese and Lawton (1987:11) state:

*The cause of the protagonist misfortune is said by Aristotle to be hamartia (error of judgement) often more freely translated 'as tragic flaw'.*

From this assertion it can be assumed that the protagonist misfortune is due to his error of judgement. Man in his real life situation is devoid of ultimate perfection. He is naturally proud and has confidence in himself. He disregards sacred moral norms and in this manner speeds up the process of falling from fortune to misfortune.

In the same way Hornby (1986:329) defines the term flaw (i.e. error of judgement according to Aristotle) as:

*Something that lessens the value; beauty or perfection of something.*

Fowler & Fowler (1995:515) define flaw as:

*an imperfection, a blemish, a crack or similar fault, an invalidating defect in a legal matter; crack; damage; spoil.*

And regarding what Aristotle terms hamartia the **Encyclopaedia Britannica** (1994:584) states:

*The flaw in the hero may be a moral failing or, sometimes an excess of virtue, the flaw in the society may be the rottenness of the Danish Court in Hamlet or the corruption of the Roman world in Antony and Cleopatra; the flaw or faulty or dislocation may be in the universe itself, as dramatized by Lear's raving at the heavens or ghosts that walk the plays or witches that prophesy.*

Similarly, Milubi's chief characters are not all that perfect, just as much as the environment in which they find themselves is corrupt.

The following are contemptuous remarks by Alilali directed at Itani the chief character to illustrate that Itani is corrupt, immoral and that he sleeps around with women. In this regard Alilali says:

*Alilali: Ndi pfa u pfi na dzimpfuni u ita zwiuhulu. Musi vhaŋwe vhe tshililoni ene u vha e maseoni na miŋwenda. Lila duvha ngei mavhidani muŋwe ho ngo di nkwedza ndi tshi sedza ndi vhone onoyu Itani e vhukati ha avha vha hammeni. A*

*tshi khou ralo u nanga dzo nonaho. Nangoho ndo tenda, Itani lufuni a tshi ya ha yeli tshiñwe, u yela vhasadzi fhedzi.*

(Milubi, 1985:42)

*(Alilali: I learnt that even at the funeral he is shocking. While others are mourning he will be laughing and joking with women. The other day while we were at the graveyard someone tipped me off and when I looked I saw the very same Itani in the company of the very same women. He was selecting the fat ones. Truly I admit, when Itani goes to the funeral he is there for nothing else other than looking for women.)*

Another flaw in Itani's character is that he is an instrument of nepotism and favouritism. He promotes his girl friend to a higher post. He is in love with Selina who is Maraga's wife. He promotes her to a higher post as well. In this instance Masindi and Alilali says:

*Masindi: Ri pfa u pfi onoyu Selina na u gonyiswa mushumoni o no gonyiswa. Hu pfi u hangei mathakhethakheni awo.*

*Alilali: A nga kundwa ngani. O phasa vhadzimu hafhu, zwa mbo mu nakela. Uyu Elisa o hanaho u phasa vhadzimu zwawe vha vhuya vha vhona zwo mu nakela? A hu na tsho mu nakelaho.*

(Milubi, 1985:41)

*(Masindi: We understand this Selina has been promoted.  
It is said she is now right on top.*

*Alilali: I thought as much. She made sacrifices to the  
gods and this went right for her. Look at Elisa  
who refused to make sacrifice to the gods, she  
never came all right.)*

Another atrocity that Itani commits is to accept bribes. He never promotes nor hires anybody who is not prepared to give him a bribe. The following are words spoken by Doyoyo to illustrate this argument:

*Doyoyo: Mphedziseni na ene ndo tangana nae a tshi  
khou khada lipulu lingafha la zwinanga  
zwingafha. Naho hu swiswini, u vhona ndo di  
vhona. Ku khadelwe kwaḽo kwo vha ku tshi  
amba ku khadelwe kwa tshisevho tshi livhaho  
ndongwanani ya Itani.*

(Milubi, 1985:43)

*(Doyoyo: I met Mphedziseni driving a big ox. Even if it  
was in the dark I could make it out. You could  
make out from the way in which it was being  
driven that it was being taken to Itani as his  
relish.)*

As the plot unfolds towards the climax readers are made to realize that all these atrocities, namely, accepting bribes, undeserved promotions and sleeping around with women, perpetrates Itani's own self-destruction. In the end Itani is caught red-handed with Selina, the wife to Maraga in the act of making love, and Maraga hacks him to death.

Masindi, the tragic heroine in **Mukosi wa Lufu** is apparently devoid of any flaw in her character. What may be termed a flaw in her character is that she does not resist the act of being abused by both Maria and Mawela. She hardly defends herself. In the end she dies tragically, innocent as she is.

In **Khoro dzi sa Dzenelani** the flaw in Tshibovhola's character is his stubbornness. He strictly prohibits members of the congregation to go to the initiation school. When he learns that his children have also gone to the initiation school he does not want to accept the situation. Instead he blames Satan or the devil: In this regard Tshibovhola says:

*Tshibovhola: Sathane u khou lingela mini lutendo lwanga  
naa? (Vha sedza fhasi vha dzungudza thoho)*

(Milubi, 1996:16)

*(Tshibovhola: What is Satan testing my faith? (He looks  
down and shakes his head.)*

Another flaw in Tshibovhola's character is that despite the fact that he claims to be a Christian, he is deceptive and unfaithful. When he discovers that his daughter Murendeni

is pregnant and Nndwakhulu, the son of the paramount chief is responsible, he tries to bribe the royal family into agreeing that the two couples should get married the Western way. And, the irony of the whole story is that he has embezzled the church funds for the purpose. The following conversation between Tshibovhola and Bababa illustrates this argument:

*Tshibovhola: Hai nandi. Kha vha fare hafha (vha bvisa gwama vha lila u vha nekedza)*

*Bababa: Tshelede nngafha vha i wana ngafhi vhafunzi? Ndi amba ngauri na muholo wavho a tou vha mafhungo a u babadedza.*

*Tshibovhola: He!i ndi gwama la tshivhidzo la u fhatisa kereke ngei Gunda. Nde litshani ndi de ndi vha ...*  
(Milubi, 1996:39)

*(Tshibovhola: Oh no! Take this (He took out a purse full of money and gives it to him.)*

*Bababa: Where do you get such a lot of money? Because I understand even your salary is too meagre?*

*Tshibovhola: This is the congregation's fund for building a church at Gunda. I have thought it rather wise to come and ....)*

What Tshibovhola is doing with the church funds is nothing better than theft and robbery. He seems to have forgotten the commandment that 'You shall never steal'. The congregation has lost faith in him. That is why at the denouement everybody rejoices at his humiliation and downfall.

In **Madombini a Ngoho** Milubi portrays Fhedzi as a tragic hero devoid of flaw in his character. Fhedzi is a prudent man who speaks the truth and dies for speaking the truth. The following words by Fhedzi illustrate this argument:

*Fhedzi: Mu<sup>^</sup>ne wanga, n<sup>^</sup>ne ndi nga si vuwe ndo ora mulilo  
wa mbava nahone ngoho ine nda vha khayo a i  
ntendeli ndi tshi kama dzivhani <sup>^</sup>ja vhuvhi.*

(Milubi, 1996:8)

*(Fhedzi: My dear sir, I will never sit by the fire of a thief  
and the truth by which I stand does not allow me  
to swim in the pool of evil.)*

These words are uttered by Fhedzi when <sup>^</sup>Dithu tries to bribe him into becoming a conformist.

Tragic flaw therefore has a far reaching effect on the development of the plot, for impurities and imperfection in characters influence their fate in life. Disaster and misfortunes that befall a tragic hero or heroine are perpetrated by a flaw in their character.

### 3.4 SOLEMNITY OF ACTION

The word solemn, according to Fowler & Fowler (1995:1323) means:

*Serious and dignified, formal accompanied by ceremony, mysteriously impressive, serious or cheerful in manner, full of importance, weighty, grave, sober, deliberate, slow in movement or action.*

From the above definition it can be deduced that solemnity means the state of being solemn or a solemn character or feeling.

Hornby (1986:820) also defines the word solemn as

*performed with religious or other ceremony; causing deep thought or respect; grave and important, serious-looking; grave.*

Solemnity, therefore, means seriousness and gravity. It can now be assumed that seriousness and solemnity are peculiar to a tragic play and that actions that deserve serious attention should be the presentation of tragedy. Noble deeds or actions that a great man does deserve serious attention whereas pity and fear stem from the reversal of a great man's fortune.

Milubi portrays his chief characters in such a way that they are people of a particular higher social status whose tragic actions evoke deep thought and respect.

Itani in **Ndi Mitodzi Muni** is presented, from exposition, as an ordinary worker earning a meagre wage. At this stage his position can be regarded as not yet significant. In Act I Scene IV Itani complains about this state:

*Itani: Vho-Razwithu, nne ndi khou dziba kha aneala e nda  
vha totela lila divha.*

*Razwithu: Afhio Vho-Itani?*

*Itani: A u ya Yunivesity ya Madevhula. Vha a divha muri u  
no aluwa fhasi ha muhwe a u nanzwi makole.*

(Milubi, 1988:12)

*(Itani: Mr Razwithu, I still stand by what I told you the  
other day.*

*Razwithu: What was that Mr Itani?*

*Itani: That I should go to the University of Madevhula. You  
know, a tree that grows underneath the other shall  
never reach for the sky.)*

Admittedly, Itani's idea of improving his academic qualifications in order to rise to a position of greatness is noble and admirable. His success in this direction earns him honour and admiration.

Milubi has, in the same way, presented Masindi in **Mukosi wa Lufu** as a dignified senior wife to Vho-Mawela. Even if Masindi's life is characterised by distress and anguish, she remains cool and contented and an act which is noble and admirable. She hardly quarrels with anybody unless she is provoked. She understands and accepts her stress and sorrows. In this instance she says:

*Tshililo: Vha a pfa mapfapfapfa a tshi pfapfama.  
Vhatami itali vha tshi di phina u fhirisa vhane.  
Ashu mapfapfapfa a munukhoni. Ri de mini?*

*Masindi: Ni songo tolou diguruda nga mugurudo wa  
zwine ni si vhe nazwo t'wananga. t'wananga.  
Muthu kha livhuwe zwenezwi zwine a vha  
nazwo. A fhedze nga u sedza he henefho ha  
mu dzhenisa e henefho hune a vha hone. U  
di t'una kha vha di t'une. Lo vha tavhela  
litshani vha ore.*

(Milubi, 1986:2)

*(Tshililo: Do you feel the smell of delicious food? Those  
who are hungry and thirsty enjoy more than  
the owners. Our delicious food is in the  
flavour. What shall we say?*

*Masindi: Do not worry yourself about things that do not concern you. A person should accept what he or she has and looks at what brought him or her where one is. Let them enjoy. It is their opportunity.)*

The manner in which Masindi dies, that is being burnt alive is one tragic action which deserves serious attention and evokes deep thought, pity and fear on the part of the readers.

Tshibovhola, the tragic hero in **Khoro dzi sa Dzhenelani** is admittedly a greatman in the sense that he is the leader of the congregation. Contrary to Christian religion principles he behaves in a strange and naive manner which, as a result, deserves serious attention. He forbids Christians to go to the initiation schools. What he himself does, does not conform to Christianity. This alienates him from the congregation so that in the denouement of the play they rejoice at his calamity.

Milubi portrays in **Madombini a Ngoho** Fhedzi the tragic hero as a great man, a political leader and an activist whose political career brings him into confrontation with the authorities. He is respected and hero-worshipped by his followers for his wisdom and the ability to discern the truth. His tragic death in the denouement sparks off violence and a serious act which leaves some of the people brutally murdered in avenging his death.

In his tragic plays, Milubi remarkably conforms to Aristotle's view that action that is worth serious attention should be the presentation of tragedy. His chief characters are great people who are, except in **Khoro dzi sa Dzenelani**, killed in the long run. Their calamity is so sad and catastrophic that it is worth serious attention, deep thought and respect.

### 3.5 CATHARSIS

When defining tragedy, Aristotle makes the mention of 'pity' and 'fear' as 'bringing about the purgation of such emotions'. In this regard Aristotle (1965:49) states:

*Fear and pity may be excited by means of spectacle; but they can also take their rise from the very structure of action which is the preferable method and the mark of a better dramatic poet.*

Meanwhile, Ramaliba et al (1994:29) asserts with regard to catharsis:

*Likhaulambilu li fanela u ofhisa vhataleli. Mpfu, u shuluwa ha malofha, u thuntshana, u rwana nga mavili, u pandelana ha munna na musadzi ndi zwithu zwi ofhisaho.*

*(Tragedy must terrify the audience. Death, bloodshed, shootings, boxing, chasing each other in the case of a husband and a wife are things that terrify.)*

The calamity of the tragic hero or heroine fills the audience with a feeling of pity, grief and fear of falling into similar misfortune.

Remarking on Aristotle's view on what he means by catharsis, Heese and Lawton (1988:116) maintain that:

*The original Greek word means 'purging' or 'purifying' indicating that what we experience when viewing a tragedy is a cleansing of emotions, a release of tension.*

Notably, Milubi's tragic plays conforms to the view that the pity and fear brought about by the imitation of tragic events result in catharsis, for, the dramatic denouement of his plays is catastrophic. His chief characters suffer a reversal of fortune and are befallen by calamity, a tragic act which evokes pity and fear of ending up in the same predicament.

Itani in **Ndi Mitodzi Muni** is, because of his moral weakness, and of course, a flaw in his character, murdered in a manner that evokes pity and fear for he is brutally hacked to death while making love to Maraga's wife. The impact of the tragic killing in this tragic ending is so great that one old woman watching the tragic act collapses with shock, pity and grief:

*Mukegulu 2: Yuwii! tshihuhu tsho raliho a tshi athu u  
vhoŋwa kha la muno, hune vhanā vha vhathu vha*

*haḁwa sa mahavha a tshi haḁwa nga kholomo. Vha mbo wa vha tshi puta mavu ngeno vhañwe vho rondolosa maḁo. Yowee, i na u fhalala mitumbu i si heyi zwihulu mitumbu ya vha sa sumbwi na nga miñwe ya muthu zwawe. Kheyi, miñwe ngeilaa, yo rukuluwa ye rukununu-rukununu sa magwaḁi tsimuni ya muḁavha. Haa, nga Vho-Ramuthaga. (Vha mbo wa vhe tsumbu!)*

(Milubi, 1985:104)

*(Mukegulu 2: Oh! There has never been such a cruelty here before where people's children are grazed like a beast grazing grass. They fall down clinching ground and others with their eyes wide open. Oh! many corpses have fallen, but not these ones. Especially those of great people. Have a look! there they are lying all over like pumpkins in the sandy field. Oh! I swear by my brother Ramathaga! (She collapses!)*

The same applies to **Khoro dzi sa Dzhenelani** . The calamity that befalls Tshibovhola at the denouement of the drama is pitiable. Tshibovhola's dignity is violated at the wedding ceremony of his daughter. The congregation laughs at his calamity, and at the same time purged of that excess of love which is the cause of disaster that befalls man in his life.

In the same way, the manner in which Fhedzi, the tragic hero in **Madombini a Ngoho** dies, is so tragic that it evokes pity and fear. Fhedzi is arrested, detained and tortured to death, an act which terrifies the audience.

### 3.6 HUBRIS

With regard to hubris Ramaliba et al (1994:27) asserts:

*Mubvumbedzwa u a dzhena khomboni nga u d<sup>h</sup>hudza. Hafha ndi hune mubvumbedzwa a d<sup>i</sup>ita ene-ene, a si tsha t<sup>o</sup>da nyeletshedzo ya vhan<sup>w</sup>e.*

*(Things turn out bad for the protagonist because of his or her pride. This is where the protagonist has confidence in himself or herself and thereby disregard other people's advice.)*

Similarly Abrams (1988:190) describes hubris as follows:

*One common form of hamartia in Greek tragedies was hubris, that 'pride' or overweening self-confidence which leads a protagonist to disregard a divine warning or violate an important moral law.*

Since the protagonist is neither too good nor very evil, his misfortune is greater than he deserves. That moves the audience to pity and fear for they realize similar possibilities of error in their own imperfect being.

Remarking on what is meant by hubris, Heese & Lawton (1988:115) state:

*It is also possible for the downfall of the hero to be brought about by fate; this can be interpreted either as the enmity or the indifference of the gods.*

Undoubtedly, Itani in **Ndi Mitodzi Muni** is so arrogant that he disregards any reproof or advice to abandon his evil deeds. The following words are a dialogue between Itani and his wife Arina who is trying to reprimand him for sleeping around with other man's wives. Itani disregards her advice:

*Arina: Vha khou sokou tanganya mulomo wa n̄tha na wa fhasi. Vhone vha no tou toka midzi kha musadzi wa muñwe muthu, izwi a si khombo ine vha do ri i na vhaloi ngomu?*

*Itani: Hee inwi, musadzi wa muñwe ni khou amba nnyi?*

*Arina: Uyu Selina we vha mu ita muñwaleli wavho ane vha tou tshatshama na henengei mudini wa hone, vhe zwi do vha takadza? ...*

(Milubi, 1985:49)

*(Arina: You are just talking. You who is rooted in someone else's wife: Are you not looking for trouble of which you will end up saying I am bewitched?*

*Itani: Hey you there, whom do you mean someone's wife?*

*Arina: This Selina whom you have appointed as your personal secretary, and you are always frequenting her home. Are you not looking for trouble?)*

Instead of taking heed of his wife's advice, Itani assaults her. He continues with his evil deeds. By so doing Itani is following a path that leads him to the chamber of death, for; in the end, he is caught red-handed in the act of making love to Selina. Maraga brutally hacks him to death.

In **Mukosi wa Lufu**, hubris as an element of tragedy is hardly there. Masindi the tragic heroine is portrayed as a typical African woman who is prudent, humble, meek and pure in heart. As a result, her misfortune is greater than she deserves. The following words spoken by Nyakubilwana, one of the minor characters, when Masindi is being burnt alive illustrate this argument:

*Nyakubilwana:*

*(Mitodzi i tshi khou elela)*

*... Hone wo vha wo tshinyani ngeno tsha muthu u songo dzhavula. Tshau tshone tsho vha yone thambulo, hau ha vha hone vhutungu he wa vhu pfa.*

*(Milubi, 1986:70)*

*Nyakubilwana:*

*(With tears running down her cheeks)*

*You are just and blameless and you have never stolen*

*anybody's property. Yours have always been suffering. What you feel is the pain afflicted on you.)*

Notably, the fact that Masindi, the tragic heroine is depicted as not being a proud woman, but a humble and innocent someone, her tragic death is bound to be pitied.

Meanwhile, Tshibovhola, the tragic hero in **‘Khorozidi sa Dzhenelani’**, is evidently proud and arrogant. Even if almost everybody does not condone what he does he remains stubborn. The following conversation between Khavhagali and Tshibovhola illustrates this argument:

*Khavhagali: Vhafunzi, ndi uri iyi yavho i do vha kereke-de ine Swondaha inwe na inwe vha vha vha tshikhou riba vhathu kerekeni iyi. Zwi amba uri hu si kale kerekeni ino hu do sala hu si tshee na muthu?*

*Tshibovhola: Ndi khwine u sala na muthu muthihi u fhira u dadza kereke ya Mudzimu nga mipfudze fhedzi. Hafhu na Bivhili yo di ralo.*

(Milubi, 1986:8)

*(Khavhagali: Pastor, what kind of church is this one of yours going to be if you are excommunicating people every Sunday. It means that eventually there will be none left in this church?)*

*Tshibovhola: It is better to remain with one soul than to fill the church of God with kraal manure. Even the Bible states that perfectly clear.)*

Tshibovhola's stubbornness, pride, arrogance and his refusal to take heed of the advices antagonize him with the whole congregation. These have also perpetrated his downfall for almost everybody feels bad about him, especially when it is discovered that he has misappropriated the church funds to finance the wedding ceremony of his daughter Murendeni.

In **Madombini a Ngoho** , Milubi successfully utilizes hubris as an element of tragedy by presenting Fhedzi as a proud and principled political leader who would never be bribed into forsaking his course of the liberation struggle to become a state security informer. If Fhedzi had not been that proud and principled he would have accepted the bribe with the result that he would not have been killed. In Act IV Scene III Dithu is presented as persuading Fhedzi to become a conformist in vain. Instead of accepting the offer, Fhedzi says:

*Fhedzi: Nne Fhedzi ndi saine bammbiri li songo nwalwaho tshithu? Ndi saine ndi tshi sainela uri nne Fhedzi we nda vha ndo toka ngohoni ndo no tseremuwa ngohoni? Ndi dinetshedze? Muthu a nga diita ngauralo a vhofholowa.*

*Hai: Ndi nga si ite ngauralo.*

(Milubi, 1988:64)

*(Fhedzi: I Fhedzi must sign a blank sheet of paper? Must I sign so that I Fhedzi who is deeprooted in truth slips and falls? Must I surrender? If one does that one might be free.*

*No: I must never do that.)*

Fhedzi, because of his stubbornness, pride and strongly held principles is killed in detention, and moreso in a manner that fills the audience with shock, pity and grief.

### 3.7 SIMILARITIES AND DISSIMILARITIES IN MILUBI'S LITERARY ART WORKS

With the exception of **Mukosi wa Lufu** , reversal is well presented in all Milubi's tragic plays. In **Ndi Mitodzi Muni** , Itani acknowledges his evil deeds while in the process of being murdered by Maraga. That is why he begs for mercy and pleads that he be forgiven. On the contrary, Masindi, the tragic heroine in **Mukosi wa Lufu** is just and blameless. She does not change from one state of affair into its opposite. Instead she changes from bad to worse so that even at her death she neither knows nor regrets for the evils she has committed.

**Khoro dzi sa Dzhenelani** and **Madombini a Ngoho** , unlike **Ndi Miṭodzi Muni** , are similar in the sense that both the tragic heroes change from one state of affair into another. Tshibovhola, the tragic hero is a respected leader who, after losing respect from the people he is leading, is humiliated.

In the same way, Fhedzi is a free man whose freedom changes to bondage and tragic death.

In as far as discovery is concerned, Milubi successfully elucidates this in both **Ndi Miṭodzi Muni** and **Khoro dzi sa Dzhenelani** . Itani the tragic hero in **Ndi Miṭodzi Muni** admits when being killed that he is wrong, just as much as Tshibovhola must have realized when he is being humiliated that he has been criminally very stupid. On the contrary, in **Mukosi wa Lufu** and **Madombini a Ngoho** discovery as an element of tragedy is, disputably hardly presented. Masindi the tragic heroine in **Mukosi wa Lufu** does not change from ignorance to knowledge even at her death for she is innocent and just. The same applies to Fhedzi in **Madombini a Ngoho** , who is portrayed as innocent, just and blameless.

With the exception of **Mukosi wa Lufu** hamartia as an element of tragedy is found in all Milubi's tragic plays. The flaw in Itani's character is that he is a low principled great man devoid of moral sense. Tshibovhola in **Khoro dzi sa Dzhenelani** is proud and stubborn, just as much as Fhedzi in **Madombini a Ngoho** is stubborn, proud and

principled enough to refuse to be bribed into becoming a state security informer, and an act which leads to his tragic death.

The tragic actions and events in all Milubi's tragic plays are admittedly solemn. The fate of Itani the tragic hero in **Ndi Mitodzi Muni** and that of Masindi in **Mukosi wa Lufu** as well as that of Fhedzi in **Madombini a Ngoho** deserves serious attention, and it evokes pity, shock and grief. In the same way, the violation of Tshibovhola's dignity by the royal family at the wedding ceremony of her daughter Murendeni deserves deep thought.

Catharsis is the one tragic element which Milubi artistically and successfully exploited in all his tragic plays to develop plot. With the exception of **Khoro dzi sa Dzhanelani**, all the tragic heroes are killed in a manner that evokes pity, fear and grief. Itani in **Ndi Mitodzi Muni** is brutally hacked to death, whereas Masindi in **Mukosi wa Lufu** is burnt alive and Fhedzi in **Madombini a Ngoho** is tortured to death while in detention.

With the exception of Masindi in **Mukosi wa Lufu** all the tragic heroes of Milubi's tragic plays are proud and stubborn, and an act which leads to their self-destruction. Itani disregards reproof and corrections. The same applies to Tshibovhola who refuses to face reality. Fhedzi in **Madombini a Ngoho** is equally stubborn, proud and principled, and an act which leads to his tragic death. And, on the contrary Masindi the tragic heroine in **Mukosi wa Lufu** is the only character that can never be associated with pride. The fact that she is portrayed as a character that is humble, meek, just and blameless implies that her misfortune is greater than she deserves.

**A: TABLE TO SHOW SIMILARITIES AND DISSIMILARITIES**

| ELEMENTS OF TRAGEDY | Ndi Mitodzi<br>Muni | Mukosi wa<br>Lufu | Khoro dzi sa<br>Dzhenelani | Madombini a<br>Ngoho |
|---------------------|---------------------|-------------------|----------------------------|----------------------|
| Reversal            | +                   | -                 | +                          | +                    |
| Discovery           | +                   | -                 | +                          | -                    |
| Hamartia            | +                   | -                 | +                          | +                    |
| Solemnity of Action | +                   | +                 | +                          | +                    |
| Gatharsis           | +                   | +                 | +                          | +                    |
| Hubris              | +                   | -                 | +                          | +                    |

## CHAPTER FOUR

The main purpose of this chapter is to examine the influence of the conflict of cultures that brings about the tragic experience in Milubi's dramas. As conflict of cultures cannot be treated in isolation, this study will also incorporate such aspects as status or position, education as a means to liberate, empowering and enlighten, belief in witchcraft, the love of money, affliction of poverty and love affair.

### 4.1 CONFLICT OF CULTURES

Hornby (1986:178) defines conflict as:

*fight, struggle, quarrel, a bitter argument, opposition, difference, be in opposition or disagreement.*

From this definition it can be assumed that conflict is a state of opposition or hostilities and a clashing of opposed principles. This is the opposition of incompatible needs or wishes in a person.

In the **Unisa Study Guide for African Languages** (1988:16) it is asserted that:

*The heart of the plot is the conflict, a crisis of struggle between two opposing forces. The conflict may be external*

*(man against man, man against environment) or it may be internal (physical, mental, emotional, moral) it may be a combination of both, external or internal.*

This assertion introduces two types of conflicts namely internal or psychological conflict and external conflict. In each instance there is a clash, a struggle or contention of wishes and needs that are contradictory. Conflict may occur inside the character himself or between two characters just as much as it may occur between many characters in two opposing camps. Conflict may occur between character and his environment or God. It may be conflict between good and evil, and it may be the conflict between two cultural values.

Ramaliba et al (1994:7) defines conflict in the following terms:

*Khudano ndi musu hu na phambano kana musu hu si na pfano kha mubvumbedzwa kana vhabvumbedzwa.*

*(Conflict is when there is a strife or when there is a hostile relationship inside a character or between characters.)*

Ramaliba goes on to make a distinction between two types of conflict, namely, the internal and external conflict. He furthermore subdivides types of external conflict into verbal, physical, intellectual, metaphysical and intellecto-physical conflict. A conflict of cultures is also cited, and, this pertains to the conflict between African culture and Western or Christian civilization.

Regarding culture Hornby (1986:210) defines it as;

*State of intellectual development among people. All arts, beliefs social institutions, etc, characteristics of a community race, etc.*

It can be assumed from this definition that culture is a way of life of a particular people.

Vhavenda, like many African peoples have, long before Whites and African races come into contact with each other, a social organization which shows that they have a very advanced type of culture. This culture is, according to some respondents now polluted and corrupted by Western or Christian civilization. A clash of the extremes of these two cultural values has brought about tragic events in African societies. Milubi, like many African writers exploits this tragic experience in his plays. A clash of these cultural values can be cited in matters related to religion, marriage customs, institutions, family laws, property ownership and beliefs.

#### 4.1.1 Religion

The Vhavenda, like many other African people, have always believed that there is a God, (**Nwali**) the Supreme Being to whom they attribute all creation. They acknowledge him as the maker of heaven and earth and the architect of the entire universe. The Vhavenda believe that this God is too exalted to concern himself directly with men and their affairs

hence; they believe in the existence of ancestral spirits or gods who act as intermediaries between man and the Supreme Being. These ancestral spirits, it is believed, abide in deities and charms.

On the contrary, Christianity is a religion which has sprung up from the Middle East, spread to Europe and brought to Africa by various Missionary Societies who converted many Africans into Christians. According to Fowler & Fowler (1995:233), a Christian is:

*of Christ teaching or religion believing in or following the religion of Jesus Christ. Showing qualities associated with Christ's teaching, kind, fair, descent, a person who has received Christian baptism, an adherent of Christ's teaching, a person exhibiting Christian qualities.*

Notably, Milubi portrays in his tragic art works, African Christian converts as people who have nothing in them which corresponds to Christianity. Mawela in **Mukosi wa Lufu** for instance is a church man flirting with witchcraft. At night, he stealthily consults traditional healers and sorcerers to solve his problems. The following event illustrates this argument:

*Ndi nga matshelonitsheloni. Vho-Mawela vha dzhena mudini wa nanga Vho-Manyuvhula Rasimphi. Henefha vha gekhana na vha<sup>h</sup>we vha tshivhidzo tshavho tshe vha vha vha tshi khou tshi funza nga Swondaha. Vha gekhana navho avha vha tshi vho bva, vhenevha ndi Vho-Vele na Vho-Denga.*

(Milubi, 1986:41)

*(It is very early in the morning. Mawela enters the village of the traditional healer Manyuvhula Rasimphi. Here, he meets some of the people in his congregation he has been preaching to on Sunday. He meets them when they are about to leave. These are Vele and Denga.)*

In this instance, it is evident that Mawela, like other Christian converts, is experiencing what can be termed psychological conflict. Mawela is confused enough not to know exactly what to do or what can save him. He chooses to be saved by the witchdoctor instead of holding fast to his Christian faith. This is an act which leads to the tragic killing of his first wife Masindi whom the sorcerer accuses of bewitching Lowani (who is Maria's newly born baby).

Even Tshilongo, a devout Christian in **Khoro dzi sa Dzhenelani** reveals in his conversation that even if he is earnest in Christian religion, he still believes in the existence of ancestral spirits. The following conversation illustrates this argument:

*Bababa: Tshilongo, tshi re hone mufunzi kha <sup>^</sup>tomelwe khopha.*

*Tshilongo: Vha <sup>^</sup>do vhona vhone. Hu khou <sup>^</sup>do tikwa dzi no vhibva. U <sup>^</sup>do itelwa zwine a <sup>^</sup>do vhona u nga na midzimu ya hawe yo mu la<sup>^</sup>ta.*

*Mukalaha: Tshilongo, a tsina zwa midzimu ni a zwi divha? Nne ndi khou ri kereke yo ni kuvha zwo<sup>^</sup>the.*

*Bababa: A nga hangwa? Zwo balela na onoyu mufunzi hoyu. Khezwi ...*

(Milubi, 1996:48)

*(Bababa: Tshilongo, one thing is for sure, this minister of religious must be expelled.*

*Tshilongo: You will see. He is looking for trouble. He will even think that his ancestral spirits have forsaken him.*

*Mukalaha: Tshilongo, so you know about the ancestral spirits. I thought the church had cleansed you of this belief.*

*Bababa: He won't forget. Even this minister of religion knows it well. The other day ...)*

It is evident from the above conversation that there is, among the characters in **Khoro dzi sa Dzhanelani**, psychological conflict of beliefs and religious moral principles, i.e. that of Christian religion and African religion. Such a clash of cultural values intensifies conflict of the tragic play which in turn leads to the development of the tragic plot of this play.

In **Madombini a Ngoho** Milubi portrays Fhedzi as a devout and a true Christian who walks with integrity. He speaks truth and declares righteousness. Even if Fhedzi is threatened with detention and death, he sticks to the truth through thick and thin, an act

which is required of a Christian. His enemies want him to lead a corrupt and false life, which is contrary to Christian principles and beliefs. This leads to a great intellectual conflict with his superiors and those who device evil to derail him from the path of uprightness. This proves that Fhedzi's tragic death is the result of his strongly held Christian moral principles.

#### 4.1.2 Marriage Customs

According to Tshivendā marriage customs a man may marry one wife or as many as possible since there is nothing immoral in being a polygamist. On the other hand, polygamism is never condoned in Christianity. Preferably a man should marry one wife.

Furthermore, a Tshivendā household is composed of parents, children, grandparents and other relatives whereas in Western culture an ideal family means parents and children (Nuclear family).

Parents may, according to Tshivendā customs get a bride for their son whereas in Western culture couples fall in love with each other, and that they should sign a marriage contract. Unlike in African culture, the purpose of getting married in Western culture is not necessarily to have children. In African culture, children are highly esteemed since the purpose of getting married is to have as many children as possible.

Milubi utilizes in **Mukosi wa Lufu** a clash of marriage customs as an aspect that brings about tragedy. The two wives of Mawela, namely Masindi the first and traditional one and Maria the second and the Westernized one, are always quarrelling. In one instance Maria and Masindi are engaged in a quarrel which is of course, a verbal conflict.

*Maria: Vhone Vho-Masindi, n'wananga a si ndode ha  
katiwi ngae, vha khou zwi pfa?*

*Masindi: Kani-ha nazwino ndi vhone pfunzedzi ya uyu  
ñwana? Vhuloi hanga u vhu ñivha ngani?*

*Maria: Aredi vha ro lowa. Vha lowa na riñe lini?  
(Milubi, 1986:21)*

*(Maria: You Masindi, my child is not a thing to play  
with.*

*Masindi: So, it means that it is you who is instructing this  
child to call me a witch. How does she know  
that I am a witch.*

*Maria: You do practice witchcraft. In any way you do  
not practice witchcraft with us.)*

This conflict escalates to a pinnacle when Maria conspires with Sambula the tragic death of Masindi whom Sambula the assassin burns alive.

Similarly, the conflict in **Khoro dzi sa Dzhenelani** is to a certain extent perpetrated by a clash of cultural values regarding marriage customs. Tshibovhola wants his daughter Murendeni to be married to Nndwakhulu the prince, according to the Western way. The royal family is vehemently opposed to this move. The royal family wants Nndwakhulu to get married on condition that Murendeni should first undergo all the premarital unions and joint initiation school (**domba**). In this regard Vhakoma says:

*Vhakoma: Vho-Mutshekwa, mafhungo ndi haya muthu wanga. Zwa mulandu ri khou zwi pfa. Hafhu na mune wawo o u tenda, fhedzi fhano mutani uno a zwi konadzei uri ri male shuvhuru lo ralaho sa ho ula hwana. Vhone kha vha ye vha vhudze Vho-Tshibovhola uri ri ri ri ri hoyo hwana kha thome a thaphudze ndila yawe. U do ri o no thaphudza a rithimuwa a da hafha ngomani heyi ya domba. A dzhena ngomani, aiwa, dinani a i tsheeho kha ri ri. Kha ri ri ndi hone e musadzi. Na u mala ri nga mala zwashu. A si zwone kani Vho-Makhadzi?*

(Milubi, 1996:25)

*(Vhakoma: Mutshekwa, this is the story. It is true that we are guilty. Even he himself admits guilt. But in this household it is not possible to accept a girl who has never undergone any initiation, like that child. Go and inform Tshibovhola*

*that the girl should first complete her course. After that she must come to the (domba) initiation school. If she goes to the initiation school everything will be fine. If that is done, we shall accept her as a woman who can be married. Is that not true, Makhadzi?)*

As Tshibovhola tries to force the matter the conflict escalates. In the denouement of the play, Tshibovhola's dignity is violated by Vhakoma at the wedding ceremony, for she burns to ashes his ceremonial gown.

#### 4.1.3 Institutions

Stayt (1968) has elaborated on various pre-colonial social institutions and their functions as found amongst the Vhavenda. These institutions are according to him:

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <i>Boys' school</i>                         | <i>(Thondo)</i>                                     |
| <i>Boys' initiation</i>                     | <i>(Vhuta<sup>^</sup>tamba v<sup>^</sup>hutuka)</i> |
| <i>Girls' initiation</i>                    | <i>(Vhusha)</i>                                     |
| <i>Premarital unions - Joint initiation</i> | <i>(Domba)</i>                                      |
| <i>Boys' circumcision</i>                   | <i>(Murundu)</i>                                    |
| <i>Girls' circumcision</i>                  | <i>(Musevhetho)</i>                                 |

(Stayt, 1968:xiv)

Unfortunately, the White missionaries, on arrival, regarded these institutions as something which is atheistic, paganistic, detestable and deplorable. Regarding the negative attitude of the White missionaries towards Venda tribal rituals Milubi (1997:3) writes:

*The production of Venda publications by missionaries was meant for an easy and swift communication and interaction between the so-called heathens and the missionaries. The paramount objective of the missionaries was to encourage the indigenous inhabitants to find fulfilment in the scriptural calling. They had to see to it that they moulded new beings who would shed their sheath of heathenism.*

Presently, formal type of Western institutions such as schools, churches, universities and technikons have now been set up in the midst of the African society. Notably, the instruction which is offered in these institutions is mutually opposed to and inconsistent with African cultural values. As a result of the clash between these two cultural values, that is, the African culture and Christian civilization, the African culture has been more adversely affected. The tragic experience emanating from this cultural conflict has evoked many African writers to write much about these sufferings.

Milubi, like many African writers, has cited on this aspect of conflicting social practice as the one which brings about tragedy in the African life situation. He purposefully presented by way of depicting, a church which is a Christian institution in the midst of the society which strongly adheres to its religion and tribal rituals. In **Khoro dzi sa**

**Dzhenelani** , Thavha, the paramount chief, commands all his subjects to go to the initiation schools. Almost all his subjects obey this command except Tshibovhola, a minister in the Christian religion church. Tshibovhola says in this regard:

*Tshibovhola: Ndo di amba nda ri ane a pfukha mulayo wa Mudzimu nga u ya murunduni kana dombani u do ribwa kerekeni na tshilaleloni. Nga tshino tshifhinga ndi divhadza tshivhidzo nga ha u ribwa fhano kerekeni ha Vho-Jimisi, Bababa na Vhomakhadzi, Vho-Ndiitwani.*

(Milubi, 1996:4)

*(Tshibovhola: I have already said anyone who transgresses the law of God shall be excommunicated from both the church and the Holy communion. Right now I announce the excommunication of Jimisi, Bababa and Vho-Makhadzi Ndiitwani.)*

Tshibovhola's negative attitude towards the initiation schools brings him into confrontation with the local church men. The congregation, together with the local community feel bad about him so that in the denouement of the play almost everybody rejoices at his calamity.

#### 4.1.4 Family Laws and Women Status

In Tshivenda, like in many African customs, the husband is the head of the family. All his wives and children are his property (**Mpuli**) and never his equals. The authority of

the husband as the head of the family is unquestionable. Everyone in the family obeys his instructions.

On the contrary, in the Western culture, the husband and wife are equal. At one stage the wife can dominate her husband, just as much as, in Western culture women are systematically included in the political, the economic, the judicial and even the discursal life of the community. In African culture, the status of women is low. Women are mere objects circulated among their menfolk, willed for example, by a father to a son as part of an estate, or traded for a few heard of cattle, bride-price or lobola.

Milubi in **Mukosi wa Lufu** portrays Masindi the protagonist, and Mawela as victims of this radical change of the position of women in African society as it is influenced by the Western perception of the status of women. As a matter of fact Masindi, the senior wife to Mawela, should be respected by Maria who is a younger and second wife to Mawela. Maria is a Westernized and educated élite whose aggressive tendencies cause distress and sorrow to both Masindi and Mawela's life. She dominates her husband. And in this regard Mawela says in his soliloquy:

*Mawela: (Vha tshi ambela fhasi): Ngoho musadzi a gonya, a gonyesa, u mbo shanduka mathakheni, ngeno munna o shanduka fhasi, fhasi-fhasi. Tshawe a hu na arali hu si u shanduka tshinamo tsho namuluwaho.*

(Milubi, 1986:49)

(Mawela. *(Speaking in a low voice) Surely the woman has ascended to the highest altitude whereas the man is right at the bottom. He is like a patch of old cloth on a new cloth which shall never stick to it.*)

It is in this tragic play **Mukosi wa Lufu** where Maria's pre-eminence and domination ultimately leads to the tragic death of Masindi whose death she plots with Sambula the assassin.

In **Ndi Mitodzi Muni** Arina, who is Itani's wife displays repugnance and open resistance to Itani's lawful authority, and a thing which Muvenda traditional woman is not allowed to do. Itani's authority as the head of the family should be unquestionable and his wife is supposed to serve his needs even if such needs are demanding or not. The following conversation between Itani and his wife Arina shows that Arina is rebellious and defiant to Itani's authoritative control:

*Itani: Ndo ni kondelela ndo zwi pfa. Musadzi a farwa sa gumba u di nga lone gumba li no pwashékana li songo wisiwa. Zwothe zwe na amba ndi zwone. Nazwino a thi athu hu tshee nga matsheloni.*

*Vho-Arina: Zwidayo hezwi zwa u mala vhasadzi vhanzhi-vhanzhi zwi no khou bvisiwa a zwi na sia. Vhathu a hu na he vha ima. Zwidayo zwa hone zwi bvisiwa*

*musi muthu a tshi vho vhona o no tshokomela  
luanakhani sa nyamulemalema.*

*Itani: Izwo zwi vhudzwa malume anu vhone  
mubvanazwithu a dovha a vha mufhedza zwithu.*

(Milubi, 1985:49)

*(Itani: I have been patient enough with you. If you handle  
a woman like an egg she becomes an egg which  
breaks without having been dropped down. What  
you have said is true. I am going to do the worst.*

*Arina: Polygamous laws of these days are nothing. People  
do not have a definite stand. These laws are made  
when one realizes that he is trapped in the thorns  
like a bat.*

*Itani: That you must tell your uncle who is the beginning  
and the end of everything.)*

Milubi successfully utilizes the aspect of African household laws and the position of women in African society as they are in conflict with Western cultural norms. Contrary to African cultural norms women are rebellious and insubordinate to their husbands, and they resist or refuse allegiance to the lawful authority of their husbands as heads of the family.

#### 4.1.5 Belief in Witchcraft

Closely allied to diseases and their treatment in Africa is the much-discussed phenomenon of witchcraft (**vhuloi**). The Vhavenda conception of this anti-social being closely resembles that of other African societies.

With regard to witchcraft as a phenomenon Stayt (1968) has this to say:

*The word **vhuloi** (sing. **muloi**) comes from the verb 'u lowa' to bewitch, and is applied to those people who through sheer malignancy either consciously or unconsciously employ magical means to encompass all manner of evil to the detriment of their fellow creatures. They destroy property, bring disease and misfortune and cause death, ...*

(Stayt, 1968:273)

It is a strongly held belief amongst the Vhavenda that a (**muloi**) witch, may be of either sex, but, it is generally believed to be a woman. The witch carries out his nefarious practices by night, sometimes travelling long distances on the back of a hyena or some other animals, and sending snakes, owls, and particularly the '**thuri**' (polecat) into the hut of the object of their spite, to bite the unfortunate person or enter his body in order to cause diseases or death.

Regarding the strongly held belief in witchcraft among the Vhavenda, Makuya (1992:31) writes:

*Kha Vhavenda muthu a nga shumisa matamba othe ane ra a  
divha a tshi sema muthu a humbela pfarelo a farelwa.  
Fhedzi a vhuya a sema muthu nga samba la vhuloi u  
hangwelwa hone zwi nga vha khwine ila phukha ye ya  
ambiwa Bivhilini i tshi nga dzhena zwayo nga lubuli la  
nelete. Samba la vhuloi ndi samba line la pwasha midi  
mihulwane na mituku.*

*(Among the Vhavenda, one can hurl all sorts of insults when  
insulting a person, and after that begs to be forgiven. But  
once one insults someone by pointing out to him or her as a  
witch to be forgiven becomes as difficult as a camel which  
tries to pass in through the eye of the needle. The stigma  
concerning witchcraft has ripped many households apart,  
big and small.)*

Notably, the Western conception of witchcraft is different from that of the Africans. Much more appropriately the belief in witchcraft and sorcery is gradually fading away amongst the Whites. The White missionary society conception of witchcraft has always been contrary to that of the Africans with the result that confusion and tragic events are experienced amongst the African society where Christian religion has taken root.

In **Mukosi wa Lufu** Milubi is evidently inspired by the tragic consequences of the belief in witchcraft to write his tragic play. Masindi the tragic heroine is suspected of having

sorcerer, despite the fact that he is a Christian. In one instance, Maria is seen persuading and convincing Mawela to consult a sorcerer:

*Maria: Hafhu n'anga dzashu dza Tshivenda vhathu vha sokou dzi nyadza. Zwithu zwinzhi zwine na makhuwa vha balelwa a vha vhuyi vha zwi vhona. Khevhalā Vho-Nyamanānga, mañanga a no rungekanya zwothe zwi re phanda hao ...*

*Mawela: (Vho-Mawela vha a femuluwa)*  
*Aredi arali zwo ralo, hu nga di sokou yiwa, fhedzi tshi no dina ndi uri afha ri muta wo funzeaho, nahone ri vhadzuli vha zwivhidzo kerekeni. Zwi tshi pfala zwi do tou pfalisa hani? Nahone, zwi tshi yo pfala ndi hune ra do pfala hani?*

(Milubi, 1986:36)

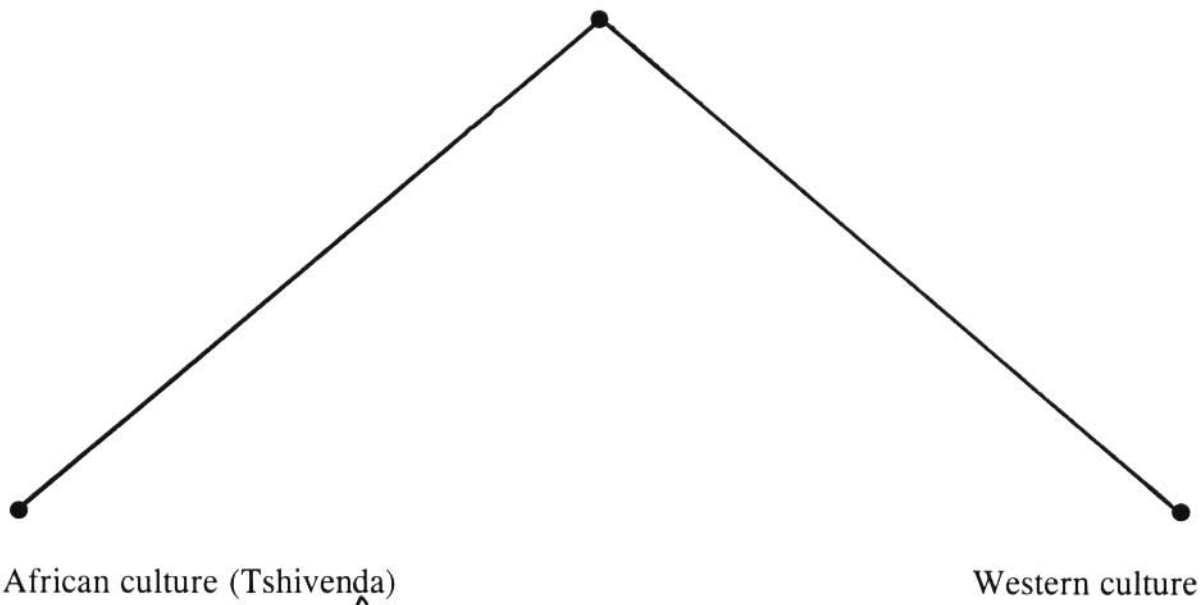
*(Maria: Tshivenda traditional healers should not be underestimated. Most of the diseases that the Whites are unable to cure the traditional healer can. There is Nyamanānga the horns that gore everything in front of them ...*

*Mawela: If that be the case let us go, but the trouble is we are the educated élites, and also church elders in the church's congregation. If it becomes known how will people take it? And if it is known how will people take us?)*

Contrary to his Christian beliefs, Mawela betrays his own religion by consulting a sorcerer to have his household problems solved. He loses faith in his God whom as a devout Christian he should hold fast on to. The tragic outcome is that Masindi the protagonist is, as a result of being suspected of being a witch, murdered cold-bloodedly.

The following is a preliminary outline of a scheme to compare and contrast African culture with Western culture.

## CULTURE



- |   |   |
|---|---|
| • Worship God (Nwali) the Supreme Being                 | • Worship God/Jesus                           |
| • Believe in the existence of ancestral spirits or gods | • Believe in the existence of the Holy Spirit |
| • Believe in life hereafter                             | • Believe in resurrection of the dead         |

and life hereafter

- Polygamy
- Customary union type of marriage
- Extended family
- Communalism
- The husband is head of the family
- Parents get a bride for their son
- Peace is wealth
- Children are a priority in marriage
- A boy inherits the will
- Pre-colonial institutions e.g. domba, musevhetho, murundu etc.
- A person is to be esteemed by other persons
- Monogamy
- Sign a marriage contract
- Nuclear family
- Privatization
- Husband and wife are equal, sometimes the wife dominates.
- Couples fall in love
- Money is wealth
- Love between husband and wife is more important than children
- Either a boy or a girl inherits the will
- Formal type of institutions; e.g. schools, churches, universities
- Individualism

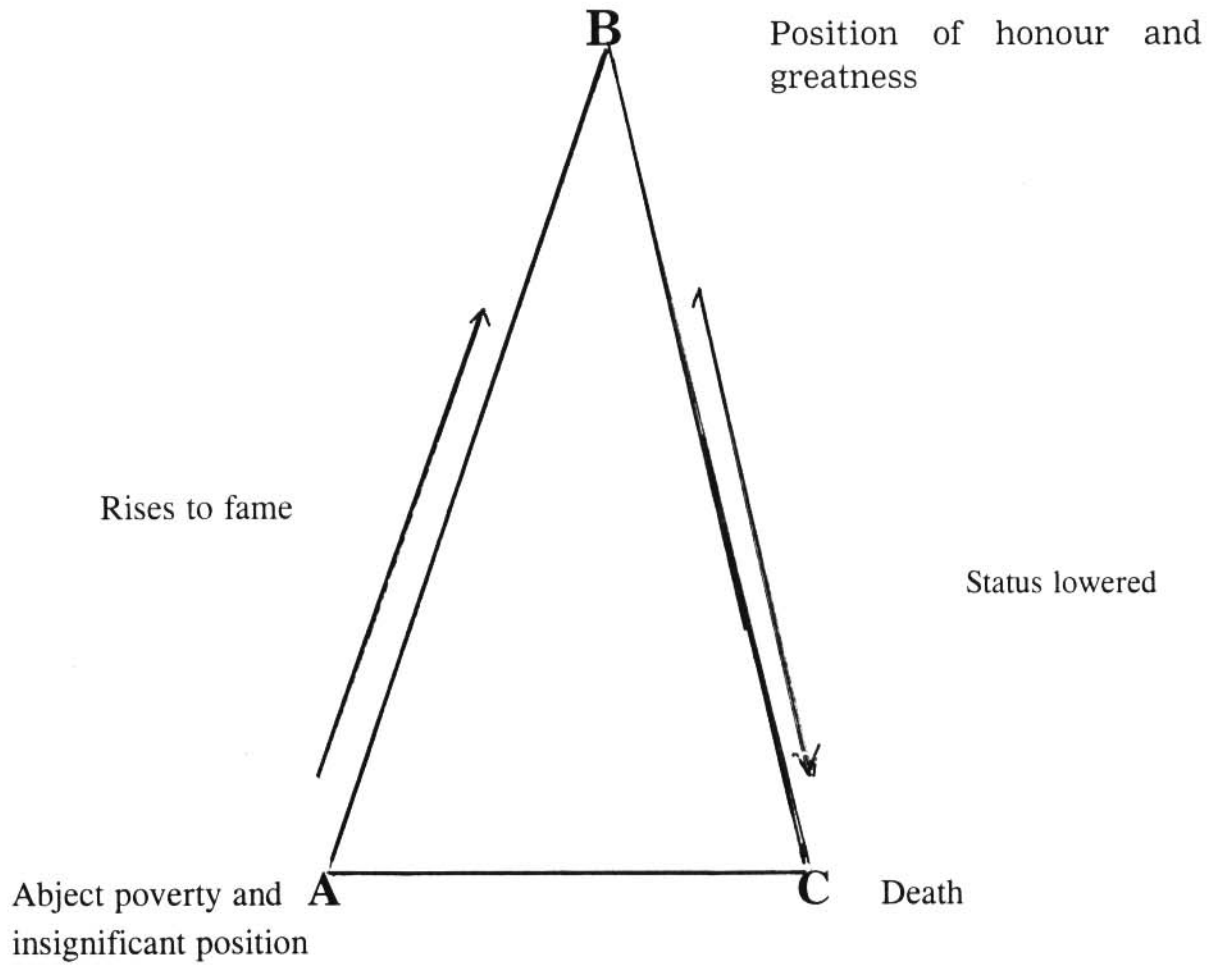
- A person is respected by virtue of his personhood
- A woman is married to provide labour and to bear children
- Old men and women or pensioners are a gift to the community
- A patient consults a traditional healer
- Money and riches earns a person honour, respect and admiration
- A woman is loved or married for her beauty
- The old aged are a problem
- A patient consults a medical doctor.

#### 4.2 POSITION OR STATUS

The tragic hero, who is sometimes referred to as the protagonist should according to Aristotle (1986) be a man 'better than we are'. He should be a man of higher social standing and a person of greater moral worth than an ordinary man. He should neither be entirely too good nor noble in order to evoke our pity and fear. The protagonist should be portrayed as suffering a reversal of fortune, i.e. a change from fortune to misfortune, and a change from happiness to misery.

Itani, the tragic hero in **Ndi Mitodzi Muni** is equally great and honourable for he occupies a high post which earns him honour and admiration. From exposition, Itani progresses from abject poverty to prosperity. Unfortunately, he misuses his position of trust to satisfy his own egocentric needs which becomes an act that leads him to a path of self-destruction and damnation. The following diagram illustrates Itani's rise from poverty to prosperity and his fall from the position of greatness into nothingness:

# ITANI



Milubi also portrays in **Mukosi wa Lufu** Masindi, the tragic heroine, in line with Aristotle's view of a protagonist. Masindi is great in the sense that she is the senior wife to Mawela. Their marriage is one of customary union whereas Maria the second and Westernized wife is married out of incommunity of property. This has a far reaching effect of rendering the position of Masindi in the household insignificant. Maria's predominance in Mawela's household can be seen when she says:

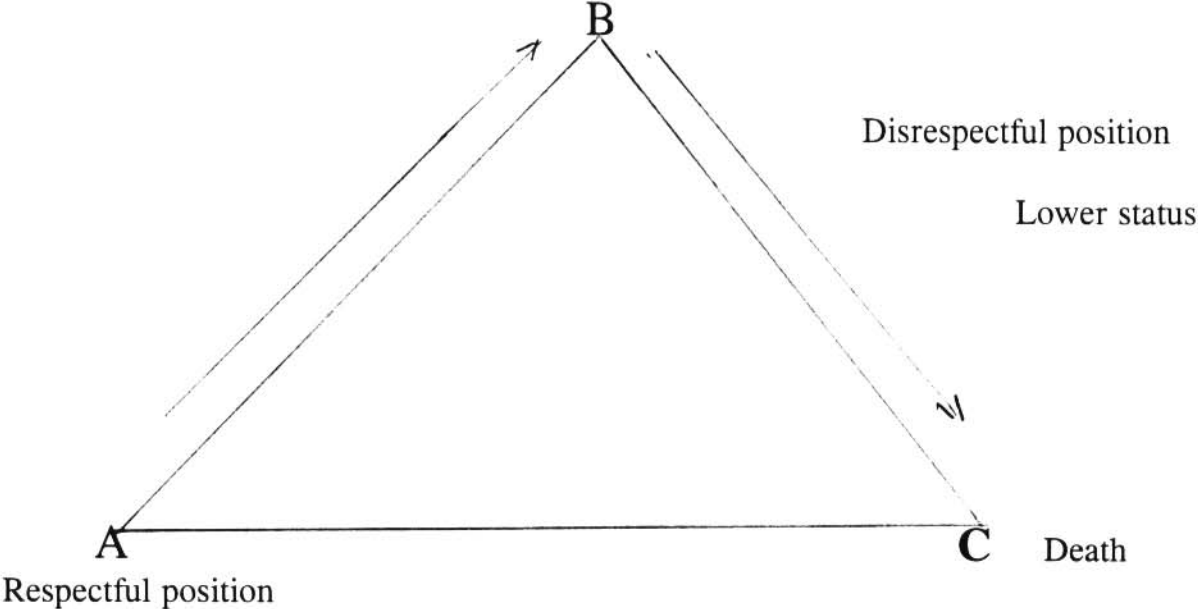
*Maria: Zwine vhe ndi ite zwone ndi zwifhio? Arali zwi hezwi zwa u isa zwinwe zwe ra vhuya nazwo doroboni hafho mutani wa Vho-Masindi a thi nga fanywi ndo ita. Muñwe na muñwe nala dzi zwanḁani. Ndi musadzi ane a nga gagadika kha u tanzwa wawe ñwana, hu si u gagadika kha u tanzwa musadzi nga. Nahone a hu na musadzi ane a nga gonya thavha a tshi gonyela muñwe ngeno uyu tshawe hu u nzhangamisa mulilo nga khuni dza o gonyaho thavha.*

(Milubi, 1986:4)

*(Maria: What do you say I must do? If you mean to say I must take some of the things we bought in town to Masindi's household, that I will never do. Everybody has hands. I am a woman who would worry herself washing my own child and not washing another woman. And, there is no woman who can climb a mountain for another who would kindle a fire making use of the fire wood of the one who climbed the mountain.)*

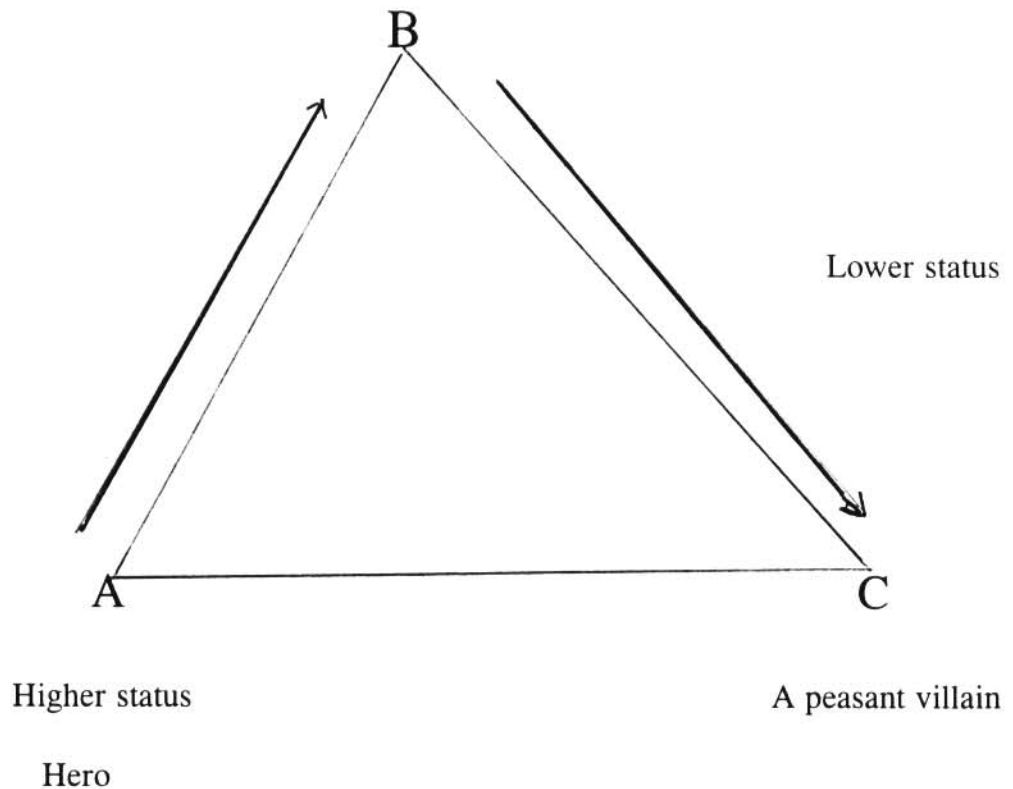
These words indicate that Masindi is being ill-treated by Maria with the result that Masindi's life is full of distress, sorrows and anguish. At the end, she dies tragically as a result. Masindi is the victim of the said consequences of polygamy. This situation may be illustrated as follows:

MASINDI



In the same way Milubi portrays in **Khoro dzi sa Dzhenelani** , Tshibovhola the tragic hero as a respected man who holds a position of trust. He is a village priest and a leader of the congregation. His negative attitude towards African rituals and beliefs brings him into direct confrontation with the local community, and, an act which when the conflict escalates brings about his own self-destruction. The following diagram illustrates this situation aptly:

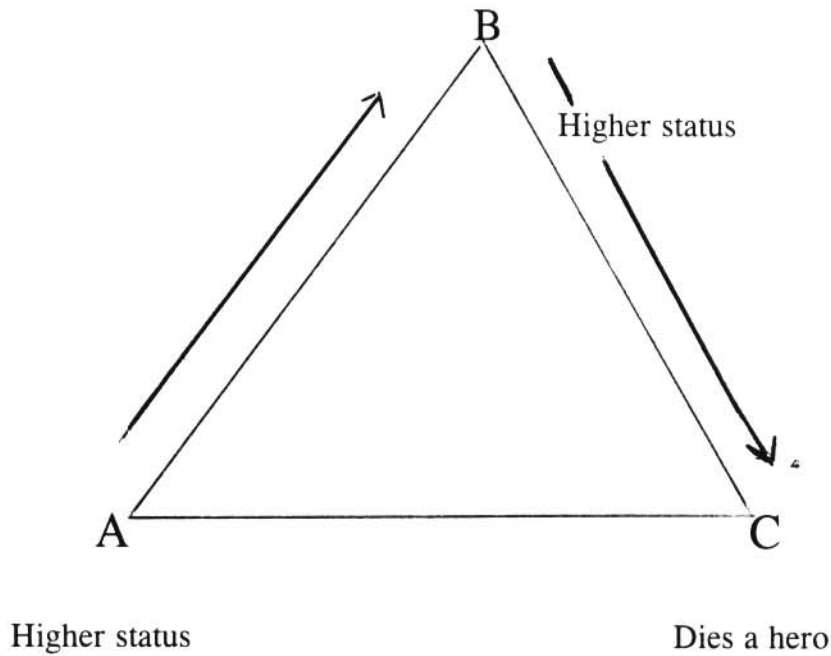
### TSHIBOVHOLA



In **Madombini a Ngoho** , Fhedzi the protagonist is portrayed as a principled political activist who is highly respected by his followers. He is detained for his political convictions and activities. He is bribed into becoming a state security informer. He

refuses the bribe. He is sent to life imprisonment where he is tortured to death. As a great man his death sparks off a series of riots. The rampaging mob attack and kill those who are responsible for Fhedzi's death. Fhedzi's circumstances may be depicted in a diagram as follows:

## FHEDZI



### 4.3 EDUCATION AS A MEANS TO LIBERATE, EMPOWER OR ENLIGHTEN

Education, it can be assumed, is an intellectual and moral training given to someone. This systematic training and instruction, especially of the young in schools is supposed to give them knowledge and develop their characters. Education should as a matter of fact

enlighten, i.e. to give more knowledge and free someone from ignorance, misunderstanding and false beliefs. Education should empower i.e. gives power or authority to act. In the same way, education should liberate one from both physical and mental slavery, and it should liberate one's mind from prejudice.

Notably, Africa has, for sometime, been invaded by Western or Christian civilization with the result that pre-colonial social, political and religious institutions of the Africans have been replaced by formal educational institutions. Directly or indirectly this has resulted in African culture being manipulated, influenced or corrupted by the Western or Christian culture. The clash between these two cultures left many Africans, as they are portrayed by African writers, disconcerted, confused, muddled and disorganized.

A question may be posed as to whether education as reflected by Itani's deeds liberates, empowers or enlightens people. Itani improves his academic qualifications in order to free himself from abject of poverty and suppression. After having occupied a position of trust, he misuses his authority by oppressing people under his direct authoritative control. He is, as a result of the education he has, a slave of sin. He is corrupt and devoid of moral sense. The fact that he is the most hated man in the society perpetrates his calamity.

The same applies to Maria in **Mukosi wa Lufu** . Milubi presents her as an educated Westernized woman who would never conform to African ways of life. The following conversation between Phophi and Vele illustrates this argument:

*Vele: Ngoho Masindi u khou zwi pfa. Maria o mu dzuia kha mutsinga. U tangana uyo Maria wa hone ndi misiteresi-hii?*

*Phophi:*

*Tshoo! Vhone a vha zwi divhi. Maduvha ano avho vho masiterese kana ayo manese a hone vha kha di tenda u hadzingana na muhwe lini. Henefha hune wa do itwa muloi uri vha sunde vha kone u sala vhe vhavhili.*

(Milubi, 1985:27)

*(Vele: Surely Masindi is grieved. Maria is a pain in her neck. The worst part of the whole episode Maria is a mistress (female teacher)*

*Phophi: So you don't seem to know. Nowadays the mistresses and nurses do not want their husbands to get married to other women. They may rather point to you as a witch as a means to expel you so that they remain being two.)*

Maria, a Westernized educated female teacher causes Masindi, the tragic heroine immense sorrow, grief and anguish. The fact that she conspires with Sambula to have Masindi burnt alive implies that she is wicked and cruel. Throughout the play, she is, as a result of having been educated, quarrelsome, clamorous, jealousy, and treacherous. She lacks respect for both her husband Mawela and Masindi the protagonist whose tragic death she eventually plots.

Milubi has in the same way portrayed Tshibovhola the protagonist in **Khoro dzi sa Dzhanelani** as a learned minister of Christian religion who detests and abhors his own tribal rituals and religion which he regards as atheistic and paganistic. Almost all the local church men lose confidence in him for misappropriating the church funds. This act is tantamount to theft and daylight robbery. It is an act which is evil, sinister and sinful.

In **Madombini a Ngoho** Milubi portrays Fhedzi the tragic hero in such a manner that he appears to be a learned person who is tactful, trustworthy and full of prudence and discretion. In addition to this, Fhedzi appears to be an educated person who reasons with clever and sophisticated arguments. He discerns and talks the truth. This leads to his detention without trial. In the end Fhedzi languishes and dies tragically in detention.

#### 4.4 URSUPATION OF THRONE OR POWER

Peculiar to most African states, is the seizure or assuming of a throne or power by force. This tendency is sometimes referred to as coup d'etat which means a violent and illegal seizing of power. This violent act has always gone hand in hand with bloodshed.

In the same way, Milubi depicts Itani the tragic hero in **Ndi Mitodzi Muni** as someone who suddenly rises to power. Itani is a respectable honourable man who occupies a high position. Unfortunately, Itani is a government official who misuses his authority to satisfy his own lust.

Itani's removal from power is tantamount to a coup d'etat. People are fed up with all sorts of lies, poverty and corruption. They sometimes no longer resort to democratic means to remove those responsible for the said evil. They, in fact, take matters into their own hands and remove those in power by force.

In **Mukosi wa Lufu** there is evidently a strife for domination between Masindi the protagonist and a senior wife to Mawela, and Maria, a Westernized younger wife. It is because of her education that Maria is pre-eminent enough to exercise control over the whole family. She has a commanding position over her husband who is supposed to be the authority and head of the family. Maria's pre-eminence brings about sudden ruin and destruction to Masindi's life.

Fhedzi, the protagonist in **Madombini a Ngoho** is equally pre-eminent, powerful and influential so that his pre-eminence is a threat to the then bureaucrats and state security. If he is not arrested, detained and killed, he will have obviously risen to power and fame for he has a commanding influence over his followers. It is because of his influence and power to orate and speak eloquently in public that his life is brought to sudden ruin and destruction.

There is, remarkably, in **Khoro dzi sa Dzhenelani**, a struggle for domination between Thavha the paramount chief and Tshibovhola the tragic hero. Thavha has authority and control over his subjects, and he gives formal orders and instructions to the people that

everybody must go to the initiation school. Tshibovhola is a religious authority who has power and commanding influence over his Christian converts. He defies the authoritative orders of chief Thavha by forbidding members of the congregation to go to the initiation schools. A state of hostilities arises between Tshibovhola, the local community and the congregation as a result. In the end, Tshibovhola's dignity is violated and eroded.

#### 4.5 LOVE AFFAIRS

Love, it can be assumed, is an instance of deep affection or fondness for a person or something. This tender and affectionate feeling is supposed to bring about everlasting joy, peace and happiness. But, on the contrary, in this instance, it brings about destruction of marriages, sorrows, anguish and death.

Itani, the tragic hero in **Ndi Mitodzi Muni** falls in love with Selina who is Maraga's wife. Their love affair ends up tragically. Throughout the play, Itani lusts after women. He misuses his authority to satisfy his own lust, thereby perverting the justice of the afflicted. In the end, Itani, because of his iniquities is confounded and brought to shame. When he is being brutally hacked to death, readers are made to realize that he is the victim of his own evil deeds.

Mawela in **Mukosi wa Lufu** falls in love with two women, i.e. Masindi a traditional wife and Maria a Westernized one. There is throughout the play conflict and friction

emanating from this act of polygamism. Maria is always contentious, clamorous and perverse in her ways. Her heart devises evil. She plots the tragic death of Masindi whose life is brought down to destruction and desolation.

In **Khoro dzi sa Dzhenelani** Milubi has in the same way presented Ndwakhulu and Murendeni as couples in love. Tshibovhola the tragic hero and a father to Murendeni, tries to derail the love affairs and cunningly has his daughter Murendeni married to her cousin. This is an act which is abhorred by the congregation and the royal family. His reputation is ruined, for in the end Tshibovhola is, as a result, consumed by terror and shame. The disruption of the wedding ceremony of Murendeni and her cousin by the royal family leaves Tshibovhola covered with reproach and dishonour.

In **Madombini a Ngoho** Milubi presents Khavhe as a bureaucrat who misuses his position of power to molest women sexually. He devises evil on a continuous basis. He attempts to molest Anna, the wife to Fhedzi who is in detention. He falls in love with Rahele whom he also molests. In the end, Khavhe is trapped in the cords of his own sin, for his calamity comes suddenly. Khavhe is doused with petrol and set alight.

#### 4.6 AFFLICTION OF POVERTY

Admittedly, poverty, illiteracy and ignorance are peculiar to most African communities. Modern tragic dramatists have utilized poverty as an aspect which brings about tragic events to develop plot of their tragic literary art works.

Milubi depicts in **Ndi Mitodzi Muni** Itani the tragic hero as a poor man who through his effort, rises to prosperity. As a poor man who yearns for money, he is perverse in his ways and accepts bribes, thereby, perverting the justice of the afflicted. This brings about his reversal of fortune as a penalty for his error of committing such wickedness. His ways are ways to hell and descend to the chamber of death and destruction. As a result of his iniquities his calamity comes suddenly for he is finally brought to ruin.

Milubi portrays, in the same way, Masindi the protagonist in **Mukosi wa Lufu** as a poor woman who is almost starving to death with her children. The following instance illustrates this point:

*Masindi: Tshililo, dzhiani kugaku kwo salaho asuku ni  
pedukane na hwana.  
(Vha a vha nekedza: Tshililo a mbo pedukana  
na hwana)*

*Ndivhuho: Hafhu Tshililo no thanya nga maanda. Ni nga  
mbo di pedula vhuhulu, nne na mpha vhutuku.*

*Tshililo: Asuvhu-ha (U a mu nekedza)*

*Ndivhuho: Ahaa! kwonoku. Rine vhanwe ri nga si fure nga  
vhanna. Mpheni hoho (Tshililo u a mu fha)*

*Masindi: A ni athu hu tshee nga matsheloni. Ni kha di  
do lila. Ni ri nne ndo rali ndi a takala naa,  
hezwi ndo ralo u dishwashwamedza nga ludzi?*

*One maḍi ndo a pfa. A vho tou ita na u  
nkholola.*

(Milubi, 1986:63)

*(Masindi: Tshililo, take this piece of porridge and share  
it with the child. (She hands it over. Tshililo  
shares it with the child)*

*Ndivhuho: By the way, Tshililo is very clever. You take the  
bigger share and you give me very little.*

*Tshililo: There you are. (She hands it over)*

*Ndivhuho: Ah! Such a small thing. I won't be filled with  
this. Give me that one. (Tshililo hands it over  
to him)*

*Masindi: You have not wept, it is too early. You are  
still going to weep. Do you think I am happy  
when I have tied my stomach with this cord?  
I have been drinking water ever since then.  
Right now I feel sick in the stomach.)*

As the plot unfolds, Masindi the protagonist is depicted as a person whose soul is exceedingly filled with grief, sorrow and anguish. Maria, the Westernized younger wife to Mawela is greedy for money. She is the cause of Masindi's sufferings and anguish. Throughout the play she devises evil and sows discord by alienating Mawela her husband from Masindi who is poor and needy. The most tragic part of the whole episode is when

Maria conspires with Sambula the tragic death of Masindi, whose destruction is the result of Maria's evil-mindedness.

In the same way, Tshibovhola the tragic hero in **Khoro dzi sa Dzhenelani** is depicted as a poor minister of religion. By embezzling the church funds, Tshibovhola betrays his own Christian religion. Tshibovhola needs money to solve his problems. He is caught in the dilemma of being faithful or deceitful. He chooses the path of deceit, an act which brings him to destruction and desolation.

In **Madombini a Ngoho** Milubi portrays and presents most of the characters as people who are poverty stricken, and therefore, easy to bribe. Khavhe is portrayed as a poor man who becomes rich by having people who are regarded as a threat to the state security systematically detained or arrested. In one instance Khavhe is seen bribing a young man into becoming a state security informer. This is what he says:

*Khavhe: Inwi tshifhinga tshothe u bva namusi na doba mafhungo ni gidimele ngeno kha nne. Gwama heji ni nga si li fhedze. A thi ri ni a divha zwauri matshelo Bavhali hu na mutangano wa avha vhathu vha no khou tshinyadza shango?*

(Milubi, 1996:33)

*(Khavhe: As from today if you happen to know something come and inform me. Money is galore. I hope you know that tomorrow there is a meeting at*

*Bavhali, of these people who are making this country ungovernable.)*

What Khavhe is doing is unquestionably sinister and abominable for in the end these iniquities bring him to total ruin and destruction.

#### 4.7 THE LOVE FOR MONEY

The love for money is one aspect that Milubi exploits fully in all his works of art, to develop tragic plot. Notably abject poverty and the love for money which is presumably the root of all evil, go hand in hand.

In **Ndi Mitodzi Muni** Milubi presents from exposition, Itani the tragic hero, as someone who is desperately in need of money:

*Itani: Vha vhona zwi zwithu-de zwine mushumoni ra  
vhulawa nga u dobedza makatshi vha si gathi vha  
tshi tou fa nga u kukuta nga masaga? U la vha ri  
u la vha fhedza vha rahela kule, ngeno vhañwe ri  
tshi la nowa dza sala dzi tshi lila. Nangoho ndi  
ngoho, a si na tshawe ndi dzadza line tshalo ha vha  
u kandekanywa nga nnyi na nnyi.*

(Milubi, 1985:55)

*(Itani: What do you think this thing is when we at work get very little while the chosen few are getting plenty of money. They eat and be filled and throw away food, whereas some of us are underfed. Truly it is true, the have-nots are like a tattered rag which should be trampled on by people.)*

Itani successfully survives this pathetic and sorrowful situation by improving his academic qualifications. But, throughout the play, he is perverse in his ways because of his love for money. Occupying a position of trust, Itani misuses his powers and oppresses the poor, the afflicted and the needy by accepting bribes. As a result of perverting the justice of the afflicted he is at the denouement of the drama, brought to shameful and undignified death.

Similarly, Maria the Westernized young wife of Mawela in **Mukosi wa Lufu** is depicted as a wicked, unloving and unmerciful woman who is greedy for money. The following speech by Maria reveals this greediness:

*Maria: Ebo! nne vha songo ntshata. Ndi a sokou tswa magoya a muñwe nde ndi vhananga lini. Vhone kha vha sokou ita zwithu zwavho fhedzi tshelede arali i heyi yanga, muthu a songo vhuya a i fara.*

*(Milubi, 1986:15)*

*Maria: Oh no! Don't tell me that I should take another woman's wild cats and make them my own children. Just do your own things and don't touch my money.*

Maria's greediness, covetousness, maliciousness and envy for money brings about distress and sorrow to Mawela's household.

In **Khoro dzi sa Dzhenelani** Tshibovhola is depicted as a poor pastor who eagerly desires money to solve his problems. Tshibovhola is, as a result, tempted to abandon the path of uprightness. He devises evil. He misappropriates the church funds, and an act which ruins his reputation. He is abhorred by both the congregation and the local community. It is because of this abominable deed that Tshibovhola is suddenly stricken by terror and shame.

Khavhe in **Madombini a Ngoho** is in a similar manner, a money-monger. He goes about with a lot of cash in his pocket to bribe people into becoming state security informers. In one instance, Khavhe is seen in the act of bribing Rahele to become a state security informer.

*(Vho-Khavhe vha mbo bvisa tshikati tsha tshelede vha tshi  
posa zwirumbini zwa Rahele)*

*Rahele: Ee! (A tshi sumbedza u mangala)*

*Khavhe: Ni songo mangala. Hafhu hu na vhane vha ri u  
nonelwa nga muvhuda vhe u a tula. Dzhiani  
tshede heyo, ni mbo renga raga ntswa ni late  
liraga helo la kale-kale la mabulannga lo imaho*

*hafha. Ni kone u renga tshiofutofu ri late dithu heli  
litswu-litswu la rŵaha wa mmo na sikidzi li no khou  
sokou swifhadza nndu yothe.*

(Milubi, 1996:43)

*(Khavhe took out a stack of banknotes and threw it on the  
thighs of Rahele)*

*Rahele: Oh! (She smiles)*

*Khavhe: Don't be surprised. By the way, there are people  
who dare not to eat a fat hare. Take this money  
and go and buy yourself a new locker and throw  
away this old one made of planks. I mean the one  
which is over there and after that buy yourself a  
new stove and throw away this dirty, old black one  
which makes the whole house appear dirty.*

It is because of the love for money that Khavhe is committing all these shameful and abominable deeds. The penalty of his error is a tragic shameful death, for, in the denouement of the drama, he is necklaced, doused with petrol and set alight.

#### 4.8 SUMMARY

The tragic consequences of the conflict of cultures, namely, African culture and Western or Christian civilization have always been the violence of human dignity. Modern tragic

dramatists, like Milubi, are seemingly evoked by this tragic experience to produce their works of art whose themes are centred around religion, belief in witchcraft, institutions, marriage customs and family laws.

The seizure of power or throne and the will to rule have, as tragic dramatists present in their tragic art works, gone hand in hand with strife, violence and blood-shed. Like people in real life, characters in plays devise evil and sow discord to usurp power. A character like Itani in **Ndi Mitodzi Muni** suddenly becomes powerful and, misuses his authority to satisfy his own lusts. This is an abominable act which leads to his doom and damnation.

Education on the one hand has, admittedly, hardly liberated, empowered or enlightened some Africans as the behaviour of Itani the tragic hero in **Ndi Mitodzi Muni** presupposes. Instead, education has on the other hand left some Africans confused. Tshibovhola a tragic hero in **Khoro dzi sa Dzhanelani** is a classic example of such Africans in real life situations.

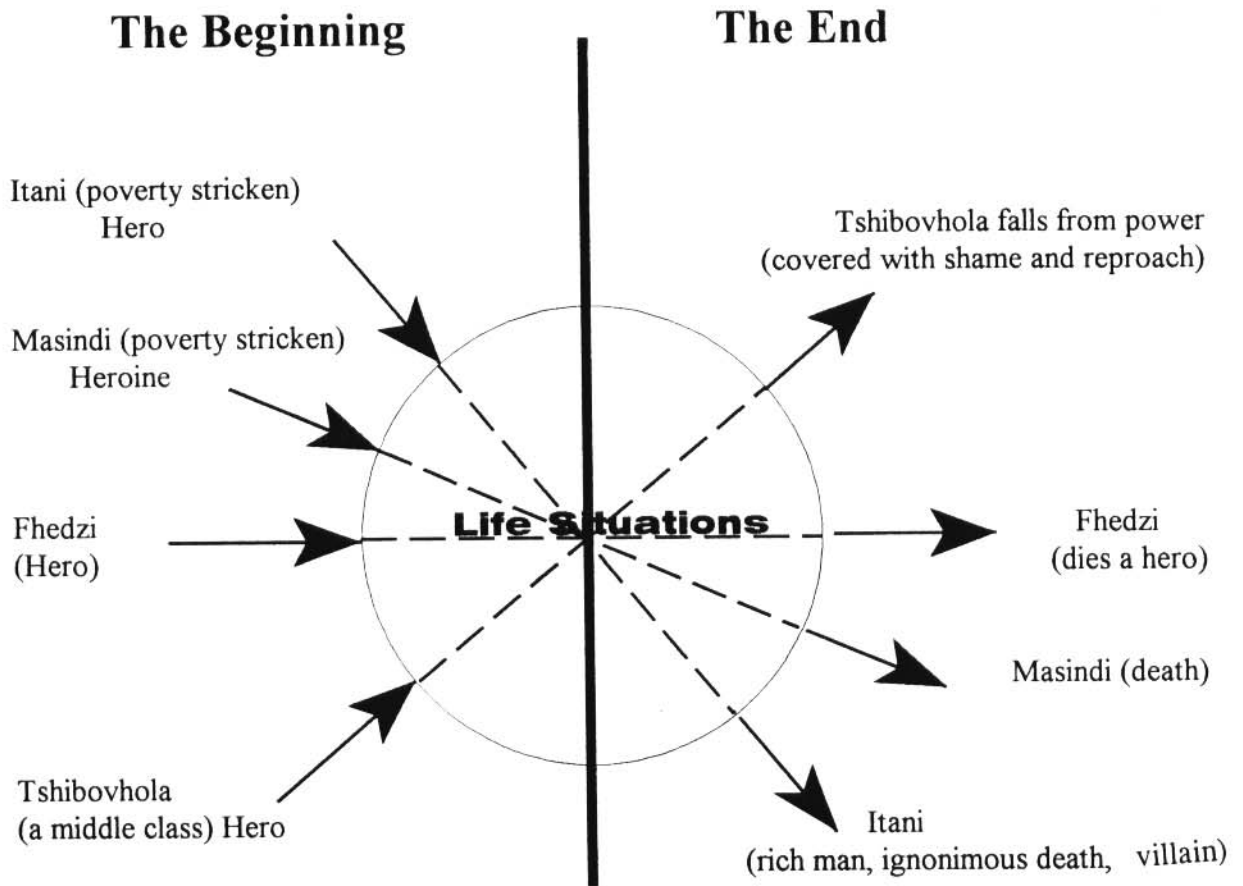
Peculiar to African societies is the practice of witchcraft and sorcery, and, the strongly held belief in it. From Christian viewpoint these practices are regarded as atheistic, paganistic and satanic. Moreover, regarding the strongly held belief in witchcraft, even in modern times, is the witch-hunt spree where people who are suspected of being witches like Masindi the tragic heroine in **Mukosi wa Lufu** are brutally murdered.

Almost all Milubi's tragic literary art works abound with characters madly in love. The love affair of Itani the tragic hero in **Ndi Mitodzi Muni** and Selina end up tragically and catastrophically. The same applies to the love affair between Nndwakhulu and Murendeni in **Khoro dzi sa Dzhenelani** .

As part of the afflictions and sorrows of existence is the affliction of poverty which perpetrates covetousness and envy for money. Milubi depicts in **Ndi Mitodzi Muni** , Itani the tragic hero as a person who has left the path of righteousness to get money. He perverts the justice of the afflicted by accepting bribes in order to accumulate wealth, thereby sowing iniquity which later on brings him to a sorrowful and shameful death.

A poverty stricken character like Masindi the tragic heroine in **Mukosi wa Lufu** almost starves to death with her children whereas Maria, the Westernized young wife to Mawela is so greedy for money, unkind, unloving and unmerciful. Similarly, poverty stricken characters in **Madombini a Ngoho** are being bribed into becoming state security informers. And those who practice these atrocities are, at the denouement of the play left ashamed and confounded. Characters like Khavhe and his fellow bureaucrats are, as a result of their love for money finally cast down to destruction and desolation.

The following diagram illustrates the fate of the chief characters in Milubi's tragic plays as determined by the life situation and the flaw either in themselves or the environment in which they find themselves.



## CHAPTER FIVE

### 5. CONCLUSION

This study discloses that Milubi's tragic plays, like that of many modern African tragic literary artists, are an expression of African nationalism, and the products of suffering, sorrow and anguish experienced by Africans in African real life situation. These modern African tragic works display indignant condemnation of the tragic consequences of conflict of African customs and tradition with the Western or Christian civilization.

Although Modern tragic dramatists seemingly deviate slightly from traditional or ancient version of tragedy, an analysis of Milubi's work reveals that elements of tragedy such as reversal, discovery, solemnity of action, and hamartia are prevalent in almost all his tragic plays. Milubi artistically presents by way of depicting in his tragic plays African characters to represent African life afflictions and distress.

In his critical appraisal of dramatic criteria with special reference to Milubi's tragic plays, Maqadzhe (1986) indicates that the effectiveness of Milubi's work is due to his African tragic experience and that the themes of his plays are centred around conflicting beliefs, religion, marriage customs, African corrupted administrative systems of government, nepotism, favouritism and oppression. These atrocities are, understandably, partly responsible for most desolation, sorrows, destruction and distress in the lives of the afflicted in African real life situations.

Tshamano, in the same way, outlines in his critical study of Radio Drama aspects such as technical tools available to script-writer, structural elements of Radio Drama, characterization and theme. The conflict of African and Western culture is the theme of the selected Radio Dramas that Tshamano analyses. The extremes of these cultures are forces operating inconsistently with each other in matters related to marriage customs, religious principles, tribal rituals and beliefs. As a sub-literary genre, Radio Drama reflects modern African milieu and life situation whereby African way of life is shaped by the Christian or Western civilization.

Bopape also investigates the nature of tragedy as it manifests itself in a Northern Sotho tragic text. Elements of tragedy such as the world, the tragic action, the tragic hero, dramatic language as well as suffering are considered. Bopape quotes Orr as having made a distinction between three major tragic modes, namely, the Greek mode which is basically divine, the Renaissance mode which is predominantly noble, and the Modern mode which is fundamentally social. **Tšhukudu**, the tragic play that he analyses, depicts the Modern African socio-economic and political life. Suffering and sorrow among the masses as portrayed in this tragic play, is the result of the sad consequences of tribalism and ethnicity which stirs up amongst the African societies jealousy, hatred, suspicion, strife and blood-shed.

Technical terms that Aristotle introduces to designate tragic elements that have played a prominent role in all the tragic modes from the Greek tragedy to the modern one are those such as tragic plot, hubris, catharsis, reversal, discovery, recognition etc.

Milubi's tragic plays that are analysed in this study, i.e. **Ndi Mitodzi Muni** , **Mukosi wa Lufu** , **Khoro dzi sa Dzhenelani** and **Madombini a Ngoho** are admittedly consistent with the description of tragedy as outlined by various authors. Likewise, a survey of tragedy from Modern African perspective reveals that Modern African tragic works of writers such as Chinua Achebe, Peter Abrahams, Mongo Beti, Dambudzo Marechera and James Ngugi are an expression of suffering and sorrows of existence emanating from African and Western cultural conflict.

In **Ndi Mitodzi Muni** Milubi, apparently shows concern of evils that destroy human values. He purposefully presents by way of depicting Itani the tragic hero as an instrument of corruption, bribery, nepotism and favouritism. These are wicked, evil and sinister deeds which lead him to his own self-doom and damnation.

Milubi, in the same way, artistically presents in **Mukosi wa Lufu** the tragic consequences of polygamy and the belief in witchcraft. Masindi the tragic heroine is Mawela's first traditional wife who is upright in all her ways. Her life is full of distress, sorrows and anguish as a result of the evil-mindedness of Maria a westernized second wife to Mawela, whose education left her unloving, unmerciful, aggressive and very clamorous. Maria eventually plots the death of Masindi the tragic heroine who is finally burnt alive.

In **Khorozisi sa Dzhenelani** Milubi artistically presents, in the midst of Venda society with its advanced state of culture, a Christian church. He depicts Tshibovhola the tragic hero as a confused minister of Christian religion whose indignant abhorrence of his own African tribal rituals brings him into loggerheads with the congregation together with the local community. Tshibovhola is, as a result, finally brought to shame and reproach.

**Madombini a Ngo** is Milubi's modern tragic play which exposes life affliction undergone by African political activists who are committed to free the afflicted masses from the shackles of their oppressors. Fhedzi, the tragic hero, is a prudent devout Christian who walks uprightly and with integrity. He is arrested, detained and tortured to death for his political convictions.

This research makes a reflection of a state of opposition, hostilities and a clash of opposed principles and incompatible needs or wishes between characters that are caught up in the dilemma of reconciling the extremes of African and Western cultural values. This conflict is cited in matters related to religion, marriage customs, institutions, family laws, property ownership and beliefs.

This research substantiates the assumption that while the Vhavenda believe, as Milubi presents it in his tragic plays, in the existence of (**Nwali**) the Supreme Being to whom they attribute all creation, they also believe in the existence of ancestral spirits or gods and also in life hereafter. The so-called devout African Christian converts as Milubi depicts them

in his tragic plays (e.g. Mawela in **Mukosi wa Lufu** ), are flirting with witchcraft, which is totally discouraged in Christianity. Much more appropriately, Christians worship one God or Jesus Christ and believe in the existence of the Holy Spirit and life hereafter.

Tshibovhola's calamity is due to his indignant attitude towards pre-colonial institutions whereas Masindi's tragic death is presumably the result of Maria's pre-eminence, polygamy and the belief in witchcraft.

Peculiar to all Milubi's tragic plays is the aspect of the position or status of the chief characters. Itani, the tragic hero in **Ndi Mitodzi Muni** rises from abject poverty and a position of insignificance into honour and greatness. As a result of having been the instrument of corruption, calamity comes to him suddenly. In the same way, Masindi, the tragic heroine in **Mukosi wa Lufu** , is a prudent, dignified, traditional and senior wife to Mawela whose tragic death is the result of Maria, a Westernized evil-minded younger wife to Mawela. The same applies to Tshibovhola, a tragic hero in **Khoro dzi sa Dzenelani** . Tshibovhola is a respectable minister of Christian religion whose calamity is perpetrated by his indignant condemnation of his own African religion and tribal rituals. Fhedzi the tragic hero in **Madombini a Ngoho** , is a highly respected political activist whose political convictions lead to his detention without trial. And, in the end, Fhedzi is tortured to death.

Instead of empowering, enlightening, and liberating one from physical and psychological slavery as well as from mental prejudice, education has, as it is reflected by Milubi's characters, left some Africans confused and disorganized. Itani the tragic hero in **Ndi Mitodzi Muni** and Tshibovhola in **Khoro dzi sa Dzhanelani** are classic examples of such characters in African real life situation.

Milubi's tragic plays, like many Modern African tragic art works studied in this research project, testify to deep humiliation resulting from the violation of African culture by the 'Western wind', and, also, a Western scorn of African cultural values, hence their resolute commitment to the cultural revival, rehabilitation and political struggle for African emancipation. Modern African tragic works are, understandably, an expression of African nationalism emanating from sufferings and sorrows experienced by Africans in the process of being culturally assimilated.

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