



Ubuntu Morality as a Basis for the Promotion of Tonga Religious Beliefs in the High God-Leza and the Spirits-Mizimo

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ABSTRACT

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The paper draws on the University of South Africa (UNISA)'s three-year study entitled 'Archaeology of Ubuntu', which was funded by the 'National Research Foundation' (NRF) of South Africa. The data utilised in this paper is drawn from oral-historical discussions conducted with purposefully sampled elders from Tonga communities in Zambia's Southern Province. The data specifically originates from the views of the elders on 'their understanding of Ubuntu'. Despite the various conceptions of Ubuntu in scholarly circles globally, few scholars have associated Ubuntu to religion despite it being a fundamental aspect of the lives of Africans. Therefore, the main premise of this paper is to link Ubuntu to religion through the concept of morality. This is done through granting special attention to the well-developed moral cults on the ancient belief in the high God-Leza and the Spirits-Mizimo in Tonga communities of Zambia's Southern Province. The paper specifically engages with the Tonga ancient belief in the high God-Leza and the Spirits-Mizimo and points out how the 'moral principle' with its moral demands or dictates leads to the promotion of the Tonga ancient belief in the high God-Leza and the Spirits-Mizimo respectively.

KEY WORDS:
Ubuntu; promote;
religion, belief; God;
Spirits

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Ubuntu is a very broad concept involving very many things. It is for this reason that it has been widely theorised in scholarly circles (Letseka, 2000, 2012; Metz, 2007, 2011; Blesser, 2008; Ramos 2002, 2006, 1999; Broodryk, 2002; Sidane, 1994). Ubuntu has actually been conceptualised in various ways owing to its broad nature as a concept. For instance, Ubuntu has been conceptualised as public policy (Nkondo, 2007), as a moral theory (Marx, 2002; Letseka, 2012; Metz & Gaie, 2010; Metz, 2007), as a humane concept (Broodryk, 2002), and as an epistemological paradigm (Ramose, 2006) to mention only a few conceptions of the concept among so many. However, it can be stated that few scholars seem to emphasise the link between Ubuntu and religion, specifically the aspect of how Ubuntu values and

principles grounded in morality promote religious beliefs in traditional settings. This paper is an attempt to illuminate how the dynamic between Ubuntu values and principles as dictated by the moral principle leads to the promotion of specifically Tonga religious beliefs related to the high God-Leza and the Spirits-Mizimo.

The paper draws its data from the University of South Africa (UNISA)'s three-year study entitled 'Archaeology of Ubuntu' funded by the South African 'National Research Foundation' (NRF). This was an international study conducted from 2014 to 2016 involving Southern African countries such as; Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia, Swaziland, Zambia and Zimbabwe as well as five provinces of South Africa, namely; the Eastern Cape, Kwazulu-Natal, Limpopo, Mpumalanga and North-West. As indicated above, this paper focuses on illuminating the dynamic between Ubuntu values and principles as dictated by the moral principle and how this leads to the promotion of specifically Tonga religious beliefs related to the high God-Leza and the Spirits- Mizimo. By doing so, the paper will also be advancing the argument that despite the lack of emphasis by scholars in academia on the link between Ubuntu and religion, empirical evidence from

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Tonga traditional settings confirms a strong link between Ubuntu values and principles grounded in the moral principle and Tonga religious beliefs in the high God-Leza and the Spirits-Mizimo. The focus of the paper is specifically drawn from the data provided by research participants (Tonga elders) on 'their understanding of the concept of Ubuntu'.

This paper is divided into eight sections. The first section focuses on the clarification of terms, the second section provides a description of the Tonga people of Zambia's Southern Province, the third section gives the different conceptions of Ubuntu, the fourth section articulates the concept of morality, the fifth section describes the Tonga religious cosmology, the sixth section is the methodology employed in the study, the seventh section presents the findings of the study, the eighth section discusses the findings of the study and the ninth section is the conclusion of the paper.

2.0 CLARIFICATION OF TERMS

This sections focuses on the clarification of some key terms or words used in the paper. This is meant to enhance proper comprehension of issues related to the overarching intention of the paper. The following are terms or words needing clarification in the paper:

Values: These are important and lasting beliefs or ideals shared by members of a culture about what is good or bad and desirable or undesirable (Business Dictionary, 2018:1). It is also vital to point out here that values usually have a tremendous influence on a person's behavior and attitude and serve as broad guidelines in all situations (Business, Dictionary, 2018:1). For instance, some common values in Tonga communities include; the value of fairness, innovation and community involvement to mention only a few.

Principle: A principle is a basic idea or rule that explains or controls how something happens or works (Cambridge English Dictionary, 2018). In other words, the word can also refer to a fundamental truth or proposition that serves as the foundation for a system of belief or behaviour or for a chain of reasoning (Translations and Word Meanings, 2018).

Religion: This is a notoriously difficult term to define for it includes many aspects but almost all definitions include the idea of ultimate reality (Capps, 1995:1). It is said that religion is "a set of beliefs, actions and experiences both personal and corporate, organised around a concept of an Ultimate Reality" (Peterson, 2003). This ultimate reality may be understood as a unity or a plurality, personal or non-personal, divine or not, differing from one religion to another.

Belief: According to the Wikipedia, an Online Dictionary (2018), this refers to the state of mind in which a person thinks something to be the case with or without there being empirical evidence to prove that something is the case with factual certainty. From an epistemological perspective, philosophers hold the view that the term refers to personal

attitudes associated with true or false ideas and concepts (Wikipedia, 2018).

Cosmology: This is a branch of metaphysics that deals with the nature of the universe (Merriam-Webster, 2018:3). It can also refer to a theory or doctrine describing the natural order of the universe.

3.0 DESCRIPTION OF THE TONGA PEOPLE OF ZAMBIA'S SOUTHERN PROVINCE

The Tonga form part of the Bantu speaking people of southern Africa. Their language is very similar to many other Bantu languages of southern Africa. It is estimated that about 1.38 million people in Zambia speak the Tonga language (Hopgood, 1992; Karpfinger 1993; Gordon, 2005).

These people live in southern Zambia along the Zambezi River (Aldridge, 1978; Holmes, 1998). The name Tonga originates from the Shona language and it implies being 'independent' (Burdette (1988). This is because Tonga villages are not administered by a centralised traditional leadership system as such people do not recognise centralized forms of government (Laure, 1994; Karplan, 1984; Carmody, 1992). As such, the Tonga people of Zambia's Southern Province have no recognised chieftainships in their villages.

The Tonga people are regarded among the oldest inhabitants of Zambia and they are divided into two distinct dialects, namely 'Plateau Tonga' and 'Valley Tonga' (Hopgood, 1992). These two Tonga dialects are widely spoken across southern Zambia. These people also had an unwritten history until after the arrival of Sir David Livingstone, a Scottish missionary and explorer in the 1850s.

The Tonga people have a rich tradition of oral history and folklore (Saha, 1994; Aldridge, 1978; Vickery, 1986). Henige (1982:20), argues that "oral traditions are those recollections of the past that are commonly or universally known in a given culture. At the core of this rich tradition of oral history and folklore are the elders in Tonga traditional settings. This is because they are the keepers of this tradition as they are the custodians of the Tonga mythical stories which form the basis for the rich tradition of oral history and folklore (Holmes, 1998; Saha, 1994).

Most importantly especially to the main concern of this paper is the aspect that religious beliefs take centre-stage in the lives of the Tonga people. In fact, like other ethnic groups on the African continent, the Tonga people can also to be said to be 'notoriously religious' (Magesa, 1998: 499) due to the fact that, 'religion' forms a fundamental aspect of their lives and is evident in their cultural practices. This aspect is specifically evident in the Tonga ancient belief in the high God or Leza, belief in the Mizimu (Spirits) or Muzimu (Spirit), as well as witchcraft and sorcery beliefs. It is also vital to point out that,

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the Tonga people have well-developed cults for the distinct religious beliefs highlighted above.

4.0 CONCEPTIONS OF UBUNTU

As a concept, Ubuntu is broad and complex. As such, it is almost impossible to capture or perceive it from a single perspective. As a consequence of the aforementioned, the meaning of the concept is largely dependent on the perception one takes in analysing it. It is largely because of this reason that the concept has been widely theorized (Letseka, 2012, 2000; Metz, 2011, 2007; Blessler, 2008; Ramos, 2006, 2002, 1999; Broodryk, 2002; Sindane, 1994; Makgoro, 1998; Shutte, 1994).

Keeping the aforementioned in view, it can be stated that the link between Ubuntu, cultural practices, laws and social regulations has compelled Ramose (2006) to contend that the concept represents an epistemological paradigm that informs cultural practices and the law among the Bantu speaking people. Due to its association with matters grounded in values of humanness, caring, sharing, respect, compassion and associated values meant to promote a happy and qualitative human community life in the spirit of family in African settings, Broodryk (2002) is compelled to conceive of Ubuntu as a comprehensive ancient African weltanschauung.

A close link between Ubuntu and indigenous African epistemologies enables Marx (2002) to cast it as an invented tradition whose task is to minimize historical chasms and fractures. Perceiving Ubuntu from a slightly different but somewhat similar perception are various scholars that argue that it is simply a moral theory, (Letseka, 2012; Mets & Gaie, 2010; Mets, 2007; Teffo, 1994). This casting of Ubuntu is owing to the involvement of an aspect of a shared moral discourse in the concept. In addition, in Ubuntu lies many of our choices, whether personal or political, or bridging the division between the two.

In another publication, Ramose (2002) locates Ubuntu within the realm of the African existential world and African conceptions of knowledge. As such, he describes Ubuntu as the wellspring flowing with African ontology and epistemology. Moreover, according to Shutte (2001), through Ubuntu, “our deepest moral obligation is to become fully human”. In his article entitled Education for Ubuntu/Botho: Lessons from Basotho Indigenous Education, Letseka (2013:340) somewhat concurs with Shutte’s view of Ubuntu above when he opines that failure to be fully human is an aspect tantamount to depersonalising oneself because a person living a life that is imbued with Ubuntu morality demonstrates concern for others and other good things (fully human) and one without has inclination to evil acts that dehumanise or depersonalises him/her. Shanafelt (1988:51), also echoes the aspect of Ubuntu as a deep obligation to become fully human when she contends that Ubuntu features

prominently in debates in Sesotho literary works as “the full expression of one’s humanity.

That which Ubuntu is should also be linked to the aspect of equipping young people with the kinds of attributes and dispositions that enable them to live lives anchored in communal understandings of personhood and humaneness (Mokgoro, 1998; Letseka, 2000; Masolo, 2010; 2004; 2003). When viewed from within African traditional thought, Ubuntu can be said to articulate our communal interconnectedness, our common humanity, our interdependence and our common membership to a community. In line with this, Metz (2007:323) observes that Ubuntu raises very strong normative issues. He further observes that Ubuntu grounds a normative ethical theory of right action, analytically setting aside Ubuntu as a comprehensive worldview or a description of a way of life as a whole. In another publication Metz & Gaie (2010:285), contend that this grounding is premised on the assumption that in African moral theory, actions are right roughly insofar as they are a matter of living harmoniously with others or honouring communal relationships.

As a closure to this section, it can be stated that since Ubuntu is a social contract initiated by social norms and values meant for the people in a public sphere, a scholar by the name of Nkondo (2007), conceives of it as public policy. A public policy is something which guides action on a particular aspect in society and Ubuntu does exactly this. This is because it guides human conduct in the public sphere according to socially desired norms and values. It is this aspect of guiding human conduct in the public sphere, which qualifies Ubuntu as public policy.

5.0 ANCHORING THE CONCEPT OF MORALITY

In simple terms, morality involves a preoccupation with human conduct especially in terms right and wrong. This perspective of what morality entails is resonated by Mbiti (1991:174) when he conceives of morals as something dealing with the question of what is right and good, and what is wrong and evil, in human conduct. This is owing to the fact that from time in memorial, in order to regulate human conduct and ensure the welfare of their societies, peoples in all societies worldwide have always had a deep sense of what is right and wrong. It is this deep moral sense that has led to the generation of regulatory systems of human conduct such as traditions, taboos, customs, rules and laws to mention only a few (Mbiti, 1991:174). Strict observation of such regulatory systems of human conduct enables the maintenance of morality in societies worldwide. The moral engagement with human conduct is done at two levels namely the personal conduct and community or social conduct respectively. Personal conduct specifically focuses on the life of the individual while community or social conduct focuses specifically on the life of society at large (Mbiti, 1991:174).

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It is important to mention here that, from an African perspective, community or social conduct is more emphasized than personal conduct owing to the fact that African life is grounded in what Masolo (2010:240) refers to as “a life of cohesion, or positive integration with others”.

According to Long and Sedley (1987), ‘morality’ denotes the differentiation of intentions, decisions, and actions between those that are distinguished as proper and those that are improper. This definition is anchored in matters of human conduct as intentions, decisions and actions are all actions which are taken by human beings and can also be categorized under human behaviors. Therefore, some human behaviors are proper and others are improper depending on what a particular social group deems as socially acceptable or not. Human conduct which is in accordance with desirable or acceptable social norms and values is deemed proper and that which is contrary to such social norms and values is deemed improper. As a way of regulating human conduct or behavior for the sake of social tranquility, improper human conduct or behavior is discouraged or stopped whenever it occurs at both personal and social levels.

Morality is also associated with compliance in terms of human conduct to a specific code of conduct, philosophy, religion or culture. This particular perspective on the definition of ‘morality’ comes out vividly in the definition provided by Stanford University (2014:1) when it points out that ‘morality’ is a body of standards or principles derived from a code of conduct from a particular philosophy, religion, or culture or it can derive from what is believed to be a universal standard. This definition of the concept of morality provides both the ontological (origin of morals) and epistemological (knowledge about morals) perspectives or grounding of the concept.

The concept of morality is a human universal. This is owing to its presence in all human societies across the world. According to Wiredu (1992:193), the concept of morality is not only universal but also essential to all human cultures. In his definition of the concept of morality Wiredu (1992:193), states that ‘morality’ is observance of rules for the harmonious adjustment of the interests of the individual to those of others in society. He contends that the imperative for morality should be: “in all inter-personal situations put yourself in the skin of the other and see if you contemplate the consequences of your proposed action with equanimity”. This moral perspective is based on right action and its grounding in matters of justice to others in all inter-personal relations and situations in a public space.

To be moral also refers to our natural human quest to be fully human. According to Shutte (2001), through Ubuntu our deepest moral obligation is to become more fully human. This implies having a moral sense of choosing right or good human conduct over bad or evil human conduct. This is in line with Letseka’s (2000:186) view on this matter when he argues that there is a separation or a gap between an

individual immersed in Ubuntu and an individual that contemplates evil vices such as rape or murder as doing so amounts to dehumanizing or depersonalizing oneself. This is because evil vices such as rape or murder and others are affront to, and are inconsistent with Ubuntu moral norms and values (Letseka, 2000:186).

Menkiti (2004:324) posits that “morality demands a point of view best described as one of beingness-with-others”. This implies that for one to be moral, one needs to conduct oneself in accordance with socially desired or acceptable norms and values. Therefore, keeping the aforementioned in view, it is important to stress the key roles played by society in acting as both a catalyst and prescriber of the norms and values which act as the basis for an individual’s journey towards what may be considered or characterized as a moral-being or a morally upright individual.

Despite acknowledging the difficulty involved in defining ‘morality’ in his book entitled ‘What Makes us Moral?’ the ethicist Neil Levy contends that a moral system must systematize norms of justice and fairness (Levy, 2004:41). Therefore, to Levy, to a large extent, a moral system must be devoted to a concern for the welfare of other people especially the aspect of equal treatment for everyone in society.

6.0 TONGA RELIGIOUS COSMOLOGY

The Tonga religious cosmology is based on a two-tier system. This two-tier system comprises of the microcosm and the macrocosm. The microcosm is associated with the immediate traditional contexts of the Tonga people or that context linked to the common daily life of the people. The macrocosm is association with those aspects which transcend the microcosmic life of the people. The Spirits-Mizimo are the centre of attention in terms of religious beliefs in the microcosm and are used for prediction, explanation and control of the universe by the Tonga people. The high God-Leza is the centre of attention in terms of religious beliefs in the macrocosm and is used for prediction, explanation and control of the universe by the Tonga people. As a consequence of the aforementioned, the Tonga people have well-developed cults for the Spirits- Mizimo and the high God-Leza (Vickery, 1986; Aldridge, 1978). Such cults specifically point to a system of religious veneration and devotion directed towards the high God-Leza and the Spirits-Mizimo. Among the Tonga, this system of religious veneration and devotion for the two named religious figures above is grounded in morality. This entails a strict compliance in terms of human conduct to Tonga religious beliefs in the High God-Leza and the Spirits-Mizimo. This aspect comes out vividly in a definition of the term ‘morality’ provided by Stanford University (2014:1), when it points out that it is a body of standards or principles derived from a code of conduct from a particular philosophy, religion, or culture or it can derive from what is believed to be a universal standard. In this definition are both ontological (origin of

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morals) and epistemological (knowledge about morals) perspectives or grounding of the concept of morality.

7.0 METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

As pointed out earlier, the data on which this paper draws derives from the study entitled 'Archaeology of Ubuntu'. The study was funded by the South African National Research Foundation (NRF) and was a Southern African research project conducted in Lesotho, Swaziland, Botswana, Namibia, Zambia, Zimbabwe, and in five South African provinces namely; Eastern Cape, Kwazulu-Natal, Limpopo, Mpumalanga and North-West. The paper reports on the Zambian chapter of the study. The study was conducted using the qualitative research method. According to Creswell (2009:4) in Hambulo (2016:21):

Qualitative research is a means for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. The process of research involves emerging questions and procedures. Data typically collected in the participant's setting. Data analysis inductively building from particulars to general themes. And the researcher makes interpretations of the meaning of the emerging data.

The 'oral historical' and 'oral traditional' nature of the study justified the use of 'oral historical conversations' instead of 'interviews'. This implies that the qualitative data from which this paper draws is from 'oral historical conversations' conducted with elders from Tonga communities in Zambia's Southern Province. The decision for grounding this study in oral historical conversations was partly because oral tradition forms the main available source for a vivid construction of the past (Vansina, 2006). Also because, According to Vansina (1985:197), in oral societies, the genres of oral tradition are as diverse as those of documents in literate societies and their range is wider than that of documents in most literate societies and includes the evidence which oral history there unearths. Oral historical conversations were employed as a research method in this study because oral history always bears norms and logical systems valuable for interpreting the past (Jewsiewicki & Mudimbe's, 1993). The study emphasised the importance of engaging elders from Tonga communities in oral historical conversations on Ubuntu mainly because the concept qualifies as a social, cultural as well as a normative concept in such communities. Since the study was on Ubuntu, a proper indigenous African epistemology, the study also emphasised the importance of communicating with the Tonga elders in their own vernacular language in order to enhance much more dependable and reliable research findings. The oral historical conversations in Tonga were later translated into English for the sake publications in the aftermath of the study.

Six (6) community elders (four (4) males and two (2) females) from Tonga communities of the Southern Province aged between 65 to 87 years were purposively sampled (see Table 1). Oliver (2006:244) defines purposive sampling as "a form of non-probability sampling in which decisions concerning the individuals to be included in the sample are taken by the researcher, based upon a variety of criteria which may include specialist knowledge of the research issue, or capacity and willingness to participate in the research". For Saumure & Given (2008:562), "purposive sampling refers to a process where participants are selected because they meet criteria that have been predetermined by the researcher as relevant to addressing the research question (e.g., people of a particular age or other demographic category)". Gobo (2007:418), argues that "purposive sampling consists of detecting cases within extreme situations as for certain characteristics or cases within a wide range of situations in order to maximize variation, that is, to have all the possible situations". In the same vein, Patton (1990:169), argues that "purposive sampling also involves selecting respondents from whom the researcher can learn a great deal in respect of issues of central importance to the purpose of the research". For Creswell (2009), purposive sampling involves selection of a specific universe of population to provide solutions to the overall purpose of the study. Based on the age-range above and on their long life experiences in Tonga communities in Zambia's Southern Province, the sampled research participants were deemed highly knowledgeable about different aspects of Tonga social life. This paper is based on the data provided by the participants specifically on 'their understanding of Ubuntu'. The table below gives the demographic profile of the research participants.

Table 1: Tonga Community elders, by age and gender

Participant	Age	Male	Female
Participant 1	84		X
Participant 2	70	X	
Participant 3	87	X	
Participant 4	74	X	
Participant 5	80	X	
Participant 6	67		X

7.1 Ethical considerations employed in the study

Some important standard practices of research ethics and principles were followed in this study. Therefore, as researchers we ensured that consent forms were availed to the research participants before their involvement in the study. We also ensured that all the major details of the study were thoroughly explained to the research participants before their involvement in the study. As researchers, we also ensured that the study fully respected and protected the rights and interests of research participants. As such, matters of the research participant's dignity, privacy and confidentiality were taken

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care of in the study. It is also vital to mention that the ethical considerations of the study were done in accordance with the UNISA (University of South Africa) Policy on Research Ethics, with a special concentration on the guidelines therein on the ethical issues to follow when dealing with human participants. Such guidelines are meant to safeguard the interests of research participants.

8.0 PRESENTATION OF STUDY FINDINGS

The oral historical conversations conducted with elders from Tonga communities in Zambia's Southern Province generated the following as research findings related to 'their understanding of Ubuntu'. Some conceptions of Ubuntu by the elders revealed that the concept also meant a moral theory grounded in the promotion of Tonga religious beliefs particularly those linked to their ancient belief in a high God-Leza and Spirits-Mizimo. Keeping the aforementioned in view, participant 1 said the following:

What makes a human being unique from other creatures is his/her recognition that he/she is a special creation...the fact that he/she is a special creation means that he/she was created by a special God-Leza...therefore, to be fully human is to firstly recognise that God-Leza exists up there (in the skies) and accept that He created us (the people) as well as to conduct ourselves in ways which are good in His eyes in our homes and in the community in order to have good and beneficial relations with Him (God-Leza).

Taking a somewhat similar conception of 'the understanding of Ubuntu', participant 3 had the following to say:

God-Leza is a God-Leza of demands...He demands proper conduct from His people. People need to abide by God's rules especially those associated with harmonious living in our communities. If we conduct ourselves in ways acceptable to God-Leza, He will always bless us with all sorts of blessings and curse us if we depart from his ways.

The views of participant 2, on his 'understanding of Ubuntu' also stress the moral aspect of the concept and a promotion of Tonga religious beliefs particularly those linked to the Spirits-Mizimo. This is what she said:

Forming part of what it takes to be a genuine Tonga traditionalist is the recognition that Spirits-Mizimo exist and also the following of Tonga traditional religious beliefs related to them such as; always making sure that our relations with them (Spirits-Mizimo) are good and this entails conducting ourselves in ways acceptable to them (Spirits-Mizimo) if living in peace is to be realised in life.

In the same lines, participant 6 opined the following:

For us that lived in Tonga villages for a long time, we believe in Spirits-Mizimo and even the people that lived before us (ancestors) did the same. It is not

just for fashion that we believe in Spirits-Mizimo...we do so because we are obliged to believe in them...Believing in them also implies duties on our part such as doing the right things (right action) in our lives in order to avoid their wrath and invite their abundant blessings.

The aspect of Ubuntu as a moral theory grounded in right action leading to the promotion of Tonga religious beliefs is also evident from the sentiments by participant 5 when he said:

As a Tonga traditionalist, I believe in both the Spirits and God-Leza. Any normal human being in Tonga traditional settings must believe in the Spirits-Mizimo and God-Leza...but most importantly, they must also ensure that they conduct themselves very well in order to avoid the wrath of the Spirits-Mizimo and God-Leza. These two things reward good behaviour with a lot of favourable blessings in traditional contexts and bad behaviour is punished with all sorts of bad afflictions and sometimes even death since they (Spirits and God) have power over life and death.

Participant 2 also added to the conceptualisation of Ubuntu as a moral theory grounded in the promotion of Tonga religious beliefs, particularly those linked to the belief in the high God-Leza and the Spirits-Mizimo when he said:

In order to be a balanced and complete person there is need to believe in God-Leza and Spirits-Mizimo in Tonga traditional settings. This is because the two bring a lot of good than harm to our lives at both personal and community level because everything good comes from them (God-Leza and the Spirits-Mizimo) and if this is not the case, it means your conduct as a person or a community is not acceptable to them.

9.0 DISCUSSION OF STUDY FINDINGS

9.1 Recognition and Acceptance of the Existence of God-Leza: an outcome of Ubuntu Morality

One of the various valid conceptions of Ubuntu in most African traditional settings is the conception of it as a moral theory (Letseka, 2012; Metz, 2007; Metz and Gaie, 2010; Teffo 1994). This aspect applies among the Tonga people of Zambia's Southern Province in that they have devised well-developed cults for the ancient belief in the high God-Leza and the Spirits-Mizimo (Vickery, 1986; Aldrige, 1978). Such cults specifically point to a system of religious veneration and devotion directed towards the high God-Leza and the Spirits-Mizimo. Also closely linked to this aspect is a moral code developed by the Tonga people meant to promote their religious beliefs in the high God-Leza and the Spirits-Mizimo. For instance, it was evident from one Tonga elder on his 'understanding of Ubuntu' that as a moral aspect in Tonga communities, all people are obliged to realise that they

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are a special creation, created by a special God-Leza. It is this realisation which prompts their recognition and acceptance for the existence of God including the belief that God-Leza created everything including humans. It is this realisation, recognition and acceptance highlighted above which compels the people in Tonga communities into upholding the moral principle of right conduct or right-action in order to maintain favourable relations with God-Leza. This is because good relations with God-Leza at both personal and communal level is what guarantees a peaceful life, an aspect highly desired in Tonga traditional live.

9.2 Benevolent acts of God-Leza as an outcome of Ubuntu Morality

From the views of the elders on 'their understanding of Ubuntu' was revealed another aspect grounded in Ubuntu morality which leads to the promotion of the Tonga belief in God-Leza. From the contentions of one participant it was clear that God-Leza is conceived of as a good God among the Tonga. However, it was also evident that He is a demanding God. This is because He demands good conduct or right-behaviour from His people in order for Him to accept them and bless them accordingly. Undesirable conduct by the people has the potential to invite malevolent acts from God-Leza as a punishment for their bad behaviour. Since people desire the benevolent and not the malevolent acts of God, they tend to conduct themselves in socially desirable ways in order to attract God's or Leza's benevolent acts in Tonga communities in Zambia's Southern Province.

9.3 Tonga Belief in Spirits-Mizimo as an outcome of Ubuntu Morality

It was also evident from the Tonga elder's 'understanding of Ubuntu' that the concept partly meant a system of religious veneration and devotion directed towards the Spirits-Mizimo by the people in Tonga communities. This is done in a cultic manner and is directed towards the Spirits-Mizimo among the Tonga people of Zambia's Southern Province. This is because what is morally desirable among the Tonga people is for each individual within Tonga communities to be genuine Tonga traditionalists. This partly entails the recognition for the existence and influence of Spirits in their immediate social contexts or the microcosm. The moral aspect features strongly in this dynamic because the cordial relations between the people and the Spirits-Mizimo is fully dependent on the way the people conduct themselves and leads to peaceful and desirable living in the community. This is because good conduct in line with acceptable Tonga traditional religious beliefs, such as the belief in Spirits-Mizimo leads to cordial relations between people and the Spirits-Mizimo. For instance, good conduct of the people could mean an issue such as frequent remembrance of the ancestral spirits in the personal and communal life of the people and the rituals associated with such. Undesirable conduct of the people could mean the neglect of the ancestral spirits as if they do not exist in the microcosmic

structures of the Tonga social and religious life. It is therefore, evident that among the Tonga, Ubuntu morality features strong as a promoter of the Tonga religious beliefs particularly those related to their belief in the Spirits-Mizimo.

10.0 CONCLUSION

Utilising data drawn from the views of the elders on 'their understanding of Ubuntu' collected through oral-historical discussions, the paper associated the concept of Ubuntu to religion. The paper specifically related the concept of Ubuntu to religion through the concept of morality. This was achieved through a special focus on the well-developed moral cults on the ancient belief in the high God-Leza and the Spirits-Mizimo in Tonga communities of Zambia's Southern Province. Through a preoccupation with the Tonga ancient belief in the high God-Leza and the Spirits-Mizimo, the paper pointed out how the 'moral principle' together with its moral demands or dictates leads to the promotion of the Tonga ancient beliefs in the high God-Leza and the Spirits-Mizimo respectively. As such, the paper acts as a paradigm shift in terms of the conceptions of Ubuntu in academia particularly the conception of Ubuntu which links it to religion because it is specifically grounded in a conception of Ubuntu as a promoter of Tonga religious beliefs linked to the High God-Leza and the Spirits-Mizimo. This rare conception of Ubuntu in scholarly circles is realised entirely from a moral perspective. It was indicated in the paper that as the Tonga people function in accordance with moral demands or dictates at both the microcosmic and macrocosmic levels, they actually perpetuate religious beliefs in the high God-Leza and the Spirits-Mizimo respectively.

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