



Healing and Reconciliation Thematic:

Discussion Papers

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REIMAGINING HEALING AND RECONCILIATION IN SOUTH AFRICA

Introduction

As a response to the ethical, morality and leadership frailties characterising South Africa in the past several years, the South African Council of Churches (SACC) set up a process, namely the National Convention of South Africa, aimed at building public consensus on the value positions and standards that should inform policy options, that are acceptable to meet the requirements of life and governance anticipated in the rights culture of the South African Constitution. A host of civil society formations (religious, business, labour, community etc.) were mobilised in an endeavour to cast a critical look at the post-1994 transition prospectus. Specifically, the idea was to re-imagine in a comprehensive and dispassionate way, key aspects of the post-apartheid socio-economic condition with particular reference to the following four broad thematic areas:

- **Anchoring Democracy**
- **Economic Transformation**
- **Healing and Reconciliation**
- **Comprehensive Quality Education**

We focus on these four thematic areas because we believe that effective strategic and policy work on each of them will have far-reaching ramifications for the over-all growth and development prospects of our country. We also recognise the dependencies and interconnections between the thematic groups. For instance, in order for the thoroughgoing changes we envisage in the education and training system to materialise, much will need to be done in the economic policy front. There simply needs to be a much better (mutually reinforcing) relationship between education and training on the one hand and the growth and development needs of the economy.

At the same time, turning around the education and training system will require critical changes in the workings and operations of the state (the state of the state). This includes focused attention on corruption, meritocracy, and an antipathy to the deep the structural and racially defined problems of inequality and unemployment. So, Anchoring Democracy means that race, class, gender, sexuality and geographic location should not determine who is included or excluded in the new South Africa. The Comprehensive Quality Education theme considers its brief to cover all aspects of education and training (from the first 1000 days to the labour market). We thus envisage a system of education that will imbue children (from a very early stage of their lives) with the values of integrity, accountability, meritocracy and community. Through educating and training this generation of learners differently, our country stands a really good chance of redefining the future of South Africa. We seek, through the values, standards, ethos and policy proposals we set out, to fundamentally re-author the future of our country and its prospects.

Theory of Change

This entire National Convention of South Africa process is mounted on the principle of human (citizen) agency. It is based on the recognition that it was a huge error in judgment for South African citizens to lower their guard with the advent of democracy. State capture, moral decay, unethical leadership and corruption are all attributable to the absence of effective citizen involvement in the definition of the ethos and new policies for democratic South Africa. With this in mind, “we must ensure that never again shall the country surrender public values to the whims of politicians – regardless of party or the leadership thereof”. Thus, there are three key elements to our theory of change (groups are free to add or deepen the definitional clarity of these):

- If a critical mass of South Africans is ‘conscientised’, sensitised, activated, through a range of communication and public engagement processes – this will unleash agential action by a wide range of citizen groupings (National Convention of South Africa).
- As the values, standards and solutions are being developed and canvassed in society, practical activities of best practice should be rolled out for people to participate in the healing of their quality of life.
- The path of healing and reconciliation is integral to the transformation of society. Reconciliation is best understood as a process, and essential for its realisation is the healing of past wounds, restoration of self-worth and human dignity as owners of the democracy, strengthening social relationships, and addressing structural injustices.

Healing & Reconciliation

These thought papers are in the full recognition that the four themes of the convention process are multi-layered and multi-faceted. They do not have a single surface nor do they have one solution. They are intended to address the diversity and multiplicities of South African human experience, and therefore they should be as inclusive as possible, while sustaining a clear objective. For this reason, an attempt has been made to break down each theme to a number of sub-themes that really require to have sub-groups of focused people to address their sub-theme. In the case of Healing & Reconciliation, there are four (4) such sub-themes:

- i. Woundedness
- ii. Identity
- iii. Justice for past atrocities
- iv. Indigenous Knowledge Systems(IKS)

IDENTITY

Kim Nates

By defining who you are, you are also defining who you **are not**.

Through your identity you connect to others with similarities; you create groups; you define who is in your group... and who is not.

Case Study I: Holocaust

Case study to explore genocide, extreme of othering;

The mass murder of Jews under the German Nazi regime during the period 1939–45; slated for utter annihilation based on a definition of the Jew as a race;

Whoever had three or four Jewish grandparents was defined as a Jew, regardless of whether that individual identified as a Jew or belonged to the Jewish religious community;

Many Germans who had not practiced Judaism for years found themselves caught in the grip of Nazi terror. Even people with Jewish grandparents who had converted to Christianity were defined as Jews.

Identity that is defined and **imposed** on you by others;

Cannot convert/change that identity or evade the consequences of that identity;

Identity used as a political tool to divide and blame

Case Study II: Rwanda

In 1994 while SA votes in democratic elections, three-and-a-half-hour flight away the genocide begins in Rwanda;

Less than 3 months, 800,000 to 1 million people murdered;

Once again a case of identities created from the outside (a history of colonialism, stratifying peoples into Hutu, Tutsi and Twa);

The child who said “I promise I won’t be a Tutsi anymore”;

Rigid identities are easier to understand, manipulate and exploit.

Case Study III: South Africa

10 years since xenophobic violence of 2008;

Confusion in identifying the other (photos of brandishing your SA ID);

On the one hand we laud the diversity of our country and continent; yet this identity suddenly becomes dangerous;

Go home or Die Here: “...turning point in the conversation about the country’s self-representation as a political community and about the specific meaning of race and nation, as well as class and citizenship.”;

“The violence that seeks to dispossess those identified as the ‘other’ to the nation is revelatory of the unfinished and contradictory nature of the transition from the authoritarian Apartheid project.

Healing/Reconciliation

Can healing/reconciliation occur without addressing the inherent tensions of **my identity versus your identity?**

Is it possible to maintain a multiplicity of identities and groups without conflict, discrimination and othering?

Rwanda: eliminated identities (no more Hutu and Tutsi); does this work?

Is reconciliation about destroying identities? Merging identities?

JHGC hopes it is about developing and nurturing an empathy and compassion for other identities

FOLLOWING THE WAY OF THE RIVER: INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE SYSTEMS, HEALING AND RECONCILIATION

Rutendo L. Ngara

The African continent is home to an incredible system of rivers – with an intricate network of tributaries, connecting streams, lakes, springs, pools, deltas, waterfalls and oceans. As a continent it boasts the longest river in the world – the Nile River - which travels a distance of more than 6,650km from the Great Lakes south of the equator and the highlands of the ancient land of Kush, now known as Ethiopia – travelling through nine countries before draining into the Mediterranean Sea. As a continent it boasts the deepest and most powerful river worldwide in the Congo River – its depths reaching in excess of 220 metres while discharging more than 50,000 cubic meters of water per second. Africa is home to the river with one of the most unusual routes in the world – the Niger River – travelling an obscure boomerang course that baffled geographers for more than two centuries. The continent furthermore boasts the Zambezi River – the river that flows into the largest single curtain of water on the planet – Mosi oa Tunya or Victoria Falls – one of the Seven Wonders of the World.

But why do I talk of rivers? According to the ancient ones of Africa, and indeed the ancient ones across the globe, everything is a teacher, knowledge lies everywhere and in all things lies wisdom. But perhaps the greatest source of this wisdom is nature. By ‘nature’ we mean a bit more than that which lies at the edge of the city, or the bushveld into which we may escape every now and then. We may describe nature as that which is untouched by human technology – the ecosystem - that which is natural. From an etymological point of view, we may we may borrow from the Latin *natura* – denoting “birth, origin, natural constitution or innate quality”. Perhaps we could go into the ancient African roots from Kemet or Ancient Egypt – and speak of Neter, which, due to the fact that the Kemetic hieroglyphic language did not record vowels is often written as NTR. Many scholars translate NTR as God or gods (Budge, 1904), the divine force or the sustaining power, which was retained in the Coptic language as *nutar* (Ashby, 1997)– finally rendering itself into common language as nature (Amen, 1990). But for many who practice the ancient ways of Kemet – NTR encompasses God and everything else. It is the Creator, the Created and the UnCreated - the Being that synthesises and pervades Life in all realms. Neter – the undefined, formless, no-thingness - is at the same time the underlying factor of all objects in the world. NTR is ‘All That Is’.

Rivers – in as much as they are a part of nature – are one of the infinite manifestations of NTR. And if wisdom lies everywhere, what is the wisdom they seek to impart? The Way of the Niger River The River Niger has an interesting story. Its source is the Guinea Highlands a mere 240 kilometres from the Atlantic Ocean (Britannica.com). Yet instead of following the course of commonly understood logic by travelling those 240 kilometres to the ocean which refuses no river – it instead moves inland in a north easterly direction – deep into the interior of the Sahara Desert in Mali. And once in the desert, instead of following this course towards the Mediterranean Sea it makes a surprising right turn near the city of Timbuktu, following a meandering journey through Niger, Benin and Nigeria – eventually discharging into the Atlantic Ocean at the Gulf of Guinea. What would have been a 240 kilometre journey to the ocean – instead becomes a sinuous crescent-shaped 4180 kilometres of river. As a consequence of this

highly inefficient route, the Niger loses two thirds of its potential flow to seepage and evaporation. Furthermore, along the way the gradient drastically decreases, thus further reducing the flow potential – and precipitating a very slow and sluggish trek towards the ocean. The result of this loss of potential is the formation of the Niger Delta – a series of braided streams, marshes and lakes as large as Belgium.

The Niger Delta is the largest wetland in Africa – and the third largest in the world, with an ecosystem containing one of the highest concentrations of biodiversity on the planet (Okonkwo & Taylor, 2015). Apart from supporting abundant rainforests, flora and fauna, it has large stretches of arable land that sustains a diverse agricultural system. It is home to more than 30 million people, made up of a 40 different ethnic groups (Okonkwo & Taylor, 2015). This Delta – the result of an inefficient but effective river – is a wellspring of diversity of and nourishment. Tragically, this diversity could soon be destroyed due to extensive dam construction and poisoning of the waters due to oil spills (Stakeholder Democracy, n.d.). The Niger Delta is slowly becoming uninhabitable by flora, fauna and humans alike. Together with the casualties of conflict due to ongoing competition for oil and its associated wealth (Okonkwo & Taylor, 2015), the Delta is gradually giving in to the atrocity of ecocide.

Indigenous Knowledge Systems and the Niger River The tale of the Niger River is the tale of Indigenous Knowledge Systems.

The term Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) - sometimes referred to as ‘Traditional Knowledge’ (TK), ‘Local Knowledge’ (LK), or more commonly as ‘Indigenous Knowledge’ (IK) (Ngulube & Onyancha, 2011) - has varying conceptions. It may refer to “[those] systems of knowledge in philosophy, science, technology, astronomy, education, mathematics, engineering, etc. that are grounded in the total ‘cultural’ (very broadly defined) heritage of a nation or society, and maintained by communities over centuries” (Odora Hoppers, 2013). IK can be seen as “theories, beliefs, practices, and technologies that all peoples in all times and places have elaborated without direct inputs from the modern, form and scientific Western knowledge” (McCorkle, 1989, cited by Ngulube & Onyancha, 2011). IKS is “knowledge relating to the technological, social, institutional, scientific and developmental” and includes economic and philosophical learning, as well as legal and governance systems (Odora Hoppers, 2002). It is the “totality of all knowledge’s and practices, whether explicit or implicit, used in the management of socioeconomic, spiritual and ecological facets of life” (Odora Hoppers, 2005).

Common features emerge from the various definitions of the knowledge of traditional and indigenous communities, including that it: has roots in a particular community and is situated within a broader social context in which “all life-forms are a result of the interaction between social and spiritual relations”; is tacit knowledge transmitted [predominantly] orally, through initiation or via demonstration and observation; □ is experiential rather than theoretical; is inherently interlinked to the understanding of the environment; is dynamic and constantly adapting (Ngulube & Onyancha, 2011).

These attributes of IKS – as described by scholars – are in many ways the attributes of the river. Like Indigenous Knowledge, rivers chart history – and thus the direction of knowledge. They are meandering – moving around nooks and crannies, traversing nuances, examining all the contours, collecting, depositing, nourishing, nurturing,

feeding, cleansing - in order to acquire full body of knowledge. For this I beg your indulgence, as I meander in the indigenous riverine way!

Apart from the limits of the banks which give shape to the form, they go beyond boundaries. They move with gravity – and sometimes venture against it. River come in multiple forms and traverse many mediums. They are not limited by disciplines – but are limited only by the great expanse of life – and death. They do not take the shortest route – but take the most accommodating route. Rivers do not take the most efficient route – but the most effective route. Like IKS, rivers take everything into consideration and thus everything with them on the journey. They are the oracle, the diviner, the seer – the reflective, flowing aspect of Neter. From rivers we learn that in IKS, knowledge, the knower and the praxis are one.

In countries such as China, IKS has provided the foundation for its philosophical, cultural, scientific, and technological advancement. However, in Africa and other parts of the world subjected to profound colonialism, the dominant paradigm has deemed the knowledge systems that the local people had used for generations as “unfit, irrelevant, primitive or even evil” (Odora Hoppers, 2013).

Perhaps then, we could learn another lesson from the Niger River. In taking the way less travelled – it seeks to find the other - the parched, dusty, arid plains of the Sahara.

The Path of the Nile River the River Nile also has a story to tell. It begins its journey from multiple tributaries within the lush, moist region of the Great Lakes and highlands of Ethiopia. From there travels northwards eventually traversing the rainless Sahara Desert, which – with no source of water from above - would be completely barren, lifeless and uninhabitable were it not for the annual flooding from below in the spring (Britannica.com).

This flooding in ancient times brought rich, fertile silt and sediment from its distal sources, allowing for life and cultivation along its banks. For millennia this set the stage for the evolution of some of the most

advanced civilizations of the ancient world – including those of Kemet in modern day Egypt, Kush or Nubia in modern day Sudan. To the indigenous peoples of Kemet, the Nile was but a mirror of the Milky Way or the Duat – the river of stars in the sky. It was, to the ancient peoples, both the Father of Life and the Mother of All. With little or no source of water from above, for so many the Nile is the source of life.

The Nile and the Principle of Ma’at Apart from bringing water and silt from the lush interior of the continent into the scorching, dusty, sparse, arid desert, the waters that emerged from below also allowed the emergence and cultivation of indigenous knowledge in Kemet.

The comprehensive construct of Ma’at existed throughout the approximately 35 centuries of Kemetic (Ancient Egyptian) civilisation (Martin, 2008; Obenga, 2004). Like the science of ecology in relation to nature (Capra, 1997, 2002), it recognises that all spheres of existence or all elements of life are interdependent, inter-connected and inter-related (Amen, 1990, 1994). Ma’at, like the contemporary concept of deep ecology, recognises that we are all embedded in and dependent upon the cyclical

processes of nature (Capra, 2002). The principle views all entities as integral parts of a whole, connected through underlying factors in supplementary and complementary relationships. Similar to the Taoist concept of Yin-Yang, this inter-dependence is an expression of indivisible duality (Amen, 2008). According to Ma'at, all things are made with their natural opposites, their receptors and the whole to which they belong in mind. As the moral and spiritual ideal of Kemet, Ma'at thus corresponds to the holistic view of the various facets of life (Amen, 1994).

Ma'at has simultaneous cosmological, social, cultural, and personal domains (Martin, 2008). In its cosmological sense, it is the precept of truth, order, balance and harmony that informs the creation and evolution of the universe. It is the construction of all things and the unfolding of all events as based on divine law - the underlying activities of all natural forces (Amen, 1990). As a social construct it promotes harmony, community, solidarity and reciprocity. The concept includes values such as love, sharing, generosity and gratitude (Amen, 2008). Ma'at is both the principle and practice of truth, justice and righteousness in the world (Karenga, 2009). In keeping with her attributes Ma'at is at times depicted as a woman with an ostrich feather in her hair, or at times holding a scale in which one pan holds a feather, while the other holds a heart.

Ma'at is the totality of all things possessing actuality, existence, or essence and pervades all spheres of reality (Obenga, 2004) – the micro- and macro-; the sacred and profane; the apparent and hidden; the physical, emotional, political, economic and social; the cosmic and spiritual. It is a principle that calls us to “constantly repair, renew and transform the world making it more beautiful and beneficial than we inherited it” (Karenga, 2009). In modern day Ma'at still exists as a principal force in the development of African societies (Obenga, 2004). ‘To know the truth’ is denoted as mya in the Mpongwe language of Gabon and as mo in Yoruba language of Nigeria. In the Nuer language of Nilotic Sudan, mat means ‘total’ or ‘sum up’. Amongst the Bantu, Ma'at is expressed by the concept of Ubuntu (Bhengu, 2006) – characterised by the adage “I am because you are” (Tutu, 1999). Ma'at asserts that everything thus has its place in time and space.

The Course of the Zambezi River the Zambezi is the fourth longest river in Africa – and the largest flowing into the Indian Ocean from the continent (Britannica.com). It arises in a black marshy dambo or vlei in the dense undulating woodlands of the miombo tree, 50 kilometres north of Mwinilunga in Zambia (Worldatlas.com). It bubbles up between the roots of a tree, very close to the border where Zambia, Angola and Democratic Republic of Congo meet. From there it travels a meandering journey – creating floodplains, traversing forests and grasslands, subsequently alternating its flow between massive rapids and easy flow – before cascading down the Mosi oa Tunya where Zambia and Zimbabwe meet. It is at times broad and shallow, at others deep and narrow as it makes its way through the two man-made lakes of Kariba and Cabora Bassa – eventually splitting into a delta as it empties into the warmth of the Indian Ocean.

The Zambezi and the Principle of Ubuntu as it follows its meandering journey through Zambia, Angola, Namibia, Botswana, Zimbabwe and Mozambique, the Zambezi carries with its ebb and flow, the spirit of Hunhu, Botho, or Ubuntu - the Southern African version of the concept of Ma'at.

Ubuntu is found in diverse forms in many societies throughout Africa – and is commonly described as the philosophy of humanity, personhood or compassion. While this is true, it is not its entirety. The etymology of the word -NTU (or -nhu, -mtu, -tho) within African languages gives clues about the underlying cosmology framing Ubuntu. The suffix NHU or THO or NTU refers to the causative, dynamic life-force or power responsible for all of creation on Earth and in the Universe. It may be attributed to the Supreme Being/Creator/God (Bhengu, 2006). NTU is the subjective matter of the Subjective Realm pervaded by Neter.

According to various authors (Jahn, 1961; Kagame, 1970; Phillips, 1990), from an ontological perspective NTU manifests in four forms in the Proto-Bantu language as:

1. Mu-NTU / Ba-NTU: 'human being(s)' or 'reasoned being' Muntu is a force endowed with intelligence. It includes the living, the living-dead (ancestors) and the unborn. It encompasses all deities and principalities. (Variations of the prefixes mu-/ba- in different languages include mu-/va-; uMu-/aBa-; mo-/ba-; m-/wa).

2. Ki-NTU / Bi-NTU: 'thing' or 'unreasoned being' Kintu encompasses forces that cannot act for themselves and which become active only on the command of a Muntu. This category includes plants, animals, minerals and objects of customary usage. In many Bantu cultures, trees do not fall under this category, but under Muntu, because they serve as the road travelled by ancestors to the living. (Variations of the prefixes ki-/bi- in different languages include chi-/zvi-; isi-/izi-; -/li-; ki-/vi-).

3. Ha-NTU: 'place and time' / 'at' Hantu is the force which localises every event and motion in space and time. All things thus have a 'where' and a 'when'. It expresses the unity of space and time. (Variations of the prefix ha- in different languages include pa-/ku-; kwa-; ga-; ha-).

4. Ku-NTU: 'modality' Kuntu is a modal force, such as beauty. (Variations of the prefix ku- in different languages include hu-/ru-/ku-; ubu-; bo-; -).

All being, all essence, in whatever form it is conceived, exists under one of the four categories. NTU is the cosmic universal force, which never occurs separately from its manifestations. It is the force in which Being and beings coalesce. NTU is the basic essence that unifies the universe and as such, is the essence of life (Ngara, 2017). From a NTU perspective, the overriding focus of life is to be in harmony with the forces of life. Harmony implies living life – not fighting or controlling life. It means steering life while understanding that there are other forces that will, in part, determine the vehicle and the direction of travel. When one is in harmony, they are NTU (Phillips, 1990).

The Person within indigenous African cosmology is perceived as inter-dependent, inter-related and interconnected with all of creation. This is the foundation of Ubuntu: Umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu (isiZulu) / Motho ke motho ka batho (Sesotho) / Munhu munhu pane vanhu (Shona) – 'A person is a person through other persons'. I am because you are. You are because we are. We are because it is. All that is. This is the root of identity.

The fact that a plant, a human being, a place, time and a mode of being share the same essential essence of NTU means that they can affect each other in adverse or beneficial ways. A hurtful thought can bring injury to the electromagnetic energy of a child. The

joy induced in a Khoisan trance dance can effect healing to an afflicted heart. Imphepho (sage) burnt in a meeting hall can dispel the acrimony of a longstanding argument (Ngara, 2017). The African indigenous science does not assume different notions of reality. It assumes that there are multiple realities occurring at the same time. Through MuNTU and the ontology of 'beingness', different aspects of one's being exist in different realms, as beings from other realms influence their current existence. Through HaNTU time, space and distance are collapsed into a single moment of multiple realities (Ngara, 2017). The science respects the validity of the unseen and the hidden, while explicating ways to experience it. All is interdependent, interconnected and interrelated. All is relational. The past is connected to the future. The future is connected to the present. And because of this there is no separation between the living, the departed or the ancestors, and those who are still to come. Through Ma'at truth exists through harmony. Given the continuum of all things through NTU, the ways of knowing are also ways of healing (Ngara, 2017).

The Route of the Congo River The Congo River, as we have said, is both the deepest and most powerful river in the world, the ninth longest globally – and the only river that crosses the equator twice. It has the largest volume in Africa due to many tributaries – second in the world to the Amazon River (Global Forest Atlas). And like the Amazon it flows through the Congo rain forest – the largest tropical rainforest in Africa, second worldwide only to the Amazon Forest (Endamana et al., 2010). The Congo Basin is home to the ancient Ba'aka or Babenzele peoples, and the endangered western lowland gorilla, while the river holds more than 4000 islands. Like the Nile it has multiple sources, including Lake Tanganyika, Lake Mweru and more interestingly – the highlands of the East African Rift. Like the Niger it does not seek a linear route – initially taking a north westerly direction into the interior of the Democratic Republic of Congo before curving gently at Bumba where it begins on a south-westerly meander through Pool Malebo which is flanked on either side by the capitals of Kinshasa in the DRC and Brazzaville in the Republic of Congo before cascading downstream through a series of cataracts and rapids into the South Atlantic Ocean.

Despite the Congo River and its tributaries rendering the DRC as the most water-rich country in Africa – accounting for approximately 52 percent of Africa's surface water reserves and 23 percent of Africa's internal renewable water resources, the country is paradoxically water scarce, with the majority of rural Congolese not having access to sanitary water (Global Water Alliance, 2015). Reasons for this are lack of infrastructure which collapsed as a result of the deadly war over resources beginning in 1998. Although it officially ended in 2003 – by 2008 – 10 years later, the war and its aftermath had caused more 5.4 million deaths, principally through disease and starvation, making the Second Congo War the deadliest conflict worldwide since World War II (Global Water Alliance, 2015).

The Congo and Images of Wounding What would indigenous wisdom tell us about the paradox of the Congo River? It would perhaps note that one of the river's key sources is the East African Rift System - a place where the earth's tectonic forces are presently trying to create new plates by splitting apart old ones. This rift is a fracture in the earth's surface that widens over time. It runs from the Gulf of Aden in Yemen towards Zimbabwe in the south, splitting the African plate into two unequal parts: The Somali and Nubian plates (Chorowicz, 2005). This complicated system of rift segments is a site of much volcanic activity, constantly churning and periodically seeking to bring up

that which boils in the core of the earth. The East African Rift is the largest seismically active rift system on Earth today. Recent activity along the eastern branch of the rift valley, running along Ethiopia, Kenya and Tanzania, became evident when the large crack suddenly appeared in south-western Kenya (Diaz, 2018). The great continent of Africa is slowly – very slowly – 50 million- years-worth of slowly - splitting into two. However, the intermittent dramatic fracturing that at times occurs does give a sense of urgency. The East African Rift may be considered as the great wound of Africa.

Yet while this deep fracturing of Africa may be seen as a terrifying wound – it is this turmoil that gives rise to the vast fresh water resources in the Great Lakes. It is these eruptions that bring to the surface volcanic deposits and lava whose high mineral content results in some of the richest agricultural lands on earth. Volcanic ash – the volcanologists say - can be considered as medicine - a time-release capsule, rich in nutrients (Fisher, n.d.).

The Congo teaches that from the depths of the wounding, lies the code to the healing.

But the River also shows us something else. In as much as the paradox of fracture and healing is evident in its source in the East African Rift – the paradox of severe water scarcity in a country with the most abundant water supply is also evident. But this paradox, Kemetite or Bantu wisdom will tell us, was caused by an underlying contravention of the principles of Ma’at – the natural order, or NTU – the essence holding the natural order in place. And the ancient ones would have told us long ago that the fact that the source of the river is in a state of turmoil and fracturing would have been an indication for society to be wary of the potential of turmoil and fracturing along the basin of the river.

But they would then all also tell us, that because of this great potential for fracturing and wounding in the river, the tributaries, streams, lakes and marshes would give way to a rainforest with an abundance of medicines to heal that potential wounding. And they would tell us that the very lava caused by the bleeding of the earth through its seismic turmoil, would contain the hidden elements needed to weave the fractured society into wholeness.

The seers of indigenous wisdom would tell us that correctly reading the forces of nature – one may be able to infer the outcome of the future.

Circumspection: An Indigenous Way of Seeing Indigenous wisdom thus gives us a method of enquiry between conflicting parties or ideas. It encourages deep investigation into the underlying unity or similarities between superficial, and hence apparent, differences, oppositions and antagonisms. By the same token it emboldens us to carefully look at underlying contradictions or divergences in that which may appear outwardly similar.

Whether we look at Ma’at or NTU – the underlying principle of indigenous African cosmology is that no matter what our external differences look like we are all inherently made of the same essence. The ability to see the inner similarities in that which looks outwardly different - is the ability to engage in synthesis (Amen, 2008) – the foundation of the intricate web that forms the natural or cosmic order.

However, synthesis is not the only way of looking at things in an indigenous cosmology. The ability to see the inner similarities does not preclude us from also looking at the inner differences in that which looks outwardly similar. That, in indigenous ways of knowing – is analysis (Amen, 2008).

The ability to synthesise and analyse does not prevent us from seeing the outer similarities in that which is may be inwardly different – a process of congregation. It furthermore does not preclude the ability to see the obvious outer differences in that which may be internally similar – a process of segregation (Amen, 2008).

When faced with a problem – or a challenge – indigenous wisdom asks us to engage not only synthesis – but also analysis, congregation and segregation – to develop a full and multi-dimensional picture through a process of circumspection (Amen, 2008). Circumspection does not privilege any one of these ways of seeing over the other. It does not render any one of these ways superior. It incorporates them all. Circumspection is what characterises the seer, the diviner, the healer. Sadly, too often, we engage only in segregation – seeing only that which keeps us separate.

Rivers, Healing and Reconciliation When, in an indigenous context, we then apply circumspection to the concept of wounding we realise that deep in its inner recesses, wounding carries the blueprint for healing. This is why the route to becoming healer in the traditional context is one of rifting, brokenness, misalignment, fragmentation, turmoil, paralysis and disharmony. For it is only through experiencing the depths of fracturing - and making the choice to move through all its contours and transcend it - that we are able not only to be the healer – but to be the healing – and thus the healed.

We then learn that the greatest medicine – the strongest medicine - is found in the sites of the deepest wounding – be it the individual, the community, a race, the places of carnage, the fields of war, the plundered mine fields, the desecrated forests, the fallen de-tusked elephants, the deboned or trophy lions, or the places of greatest bloodshed. However, this healing cannot take place from the position of the external observer. One cannot heal another if one is not willing to travel to the depths of wounding within. As Kevin indicated, the individual heals the community and the community heals the individual.

As a participant and not an observer, we can then apply circumspection with respect to the other. We can traverse our outer differences, our outer similarities, our inner differences, and our inner similarities. In this way we have a fuller experience of the other. And a fuller understanding of ourselves. The other becomes both a mirror – and the negative of a photograph.

Indigenous African knowledge systems are ritualistic. And because of this, they are founded on cosmology, relationships, cleansing and praxis (Zulu, 2017). When the Congo, Niger, Nile or Zambezi are meandering, they perform rituals (Zulu, 2017). Through these ritualistic journeys they carry with them the essential elements for sustenance, nourishment, hydration, cleansing, re-aligning, harmonising, cultivation, seeding, and healing from one point to another. They may carry with them other spirits – be it fiery spirits of the volcano, steady spirits of the mountain, medicinal spirits of the forests, or resilient spirits of the deserts. They are messengers, delivering the woes and joys of the inlands into the great expanse of the connected waters of the ocean.

The River Niger and the River Congo give us a clue about one of the ritualistic ways of indigenous wisdom. Instead of linear motion, they attempt to travel the path of a circle. And so it is in the indigenous ways. We attempt to arrange ourselves in circles, because a circle is simply the expanded manifestation of the triangle, the square, the octagon – and all other polygons. And yet – unlike the others, the circle only has one side – and it has no corners. The circle is that line that seeks to meet itself. Within the circle we see the other in ourselves – and we have a common focal point.

The minute we sit in circles, build in circles, dance in circles – we begin to imprint the consciousness of the collective in our DNA. There are no spectators, there are only participants. All are equally vulnerable. All are equally powerful.

And in these circles we dance so we can move in harmony with nature. We dance to animate the life force - the Qi, the Ra, the Nxum. We release endorphins. We stimulate energy points through our rhythmic connection to the earth. We sing because sound is a creative force – we are ‘per-sons’ – those of sound. We clap because, in connecting self to self from one hand to the other, we simultaneously re-organise the invisible wave-particles of nature around us – bringing them into harmony through a resonant frequency. We drum to arouse the common heartbeat... in all of creation.

We engage in cleansing to bring those that are lost in the ethers into alignment. We use medicines to integrate the living into the inter-generational community. We sacrifice – only with prior permission from the plants or animals that choose to do so – as a system of spiritual redress or reparations. We do rituals to facilitate retrospective reconciliation for the atrocities of the past, and thus bring healing to the future. We ritualise to prevent the stubborn cycles of history from repeating.

The individual is an indivisible duality (Amen, 1990). He or she is an intricate part of the collective because she or he is made of the same essence – NTU. Because of this we engage in the collective dream, in order to manifest a collective, heal(ing). According to Khoi proverb: //Hapo ge //hapo tama /hapo hasib dis tamas kai bo. A dream is not a dream until it is shared by the whole community (Freedom Park, n.d).

Those who perform these rituals on a large scale for communities, nations and regions, have in many instances in history been women. These are the diviners, seers, political and spiritual warriors, leaders, and healers such as Nehanda, Nzingha, Yaa Asantewaa, or Hatsepsut. Those who sought to restore truth, justice and harmony. Yet those whose histories the patriarchal systems have sought to diminish.

The Feminine Principle: The Spirit of the River The spirit of the river is the same spirit – the archetypal energy – that governs ritual, dance, song, and drum, is the feminine principle. Yet this feminine principle in itself is not monolithic. The spirit that governs the river is not the same as the spirit that governs the oceans, or the streams or the pools or the waterfalls. Each has their attributes. Each has their wisdom. Each has their healing power. The spirit of the river is not that of the grandmother, and it is not that of the mother. It is the archetypal energy of the maiden – or the girl child. This archetype goes by many names. She is Hetheru, Marimba, Oshun, Nomdende in the various African cosmologies. She is Aphrodite, Venus, Ganga Mai, White Tara, Guanyin. She is the one who very often is at the lowest rung of the social stratum. The one who is

seen to be too whimsical, immature and fancy free. Yet she is the one who has the infinite potential to carry the heat of the sun. She is the one whose womb will grow to carry the king. She is love, joy, creativity and vision. According to Kemetic cosmology she is also imagination – and therefore the principle of innovation. She is the artist, the architect and the engineer.

This spirit that governs the river is the one that governs vision. For in the river we see our reflection. And this reflection of ourselves we see in that moment – is eventually carried to the ocean, or to the marshes or the lakes. At times it gushes down might waterfalls, at others it seeps deep into the bowels of the earth. So when, according to indigenous wisdom, we subjugate, molest, rape and murder the girl child – or simply dismiss her as insignificant – like the two teens recently murdered in a school hostel in the North West - we block the energy of the river. And when in turn we in turn desecrate, pollute and unnecessarily dam the rivers – we block the ability of the girl child to channel the wisdom of the river, and thus bring healing to society. We block the potential of our own reflection to traverse the myriad contours of the earth. For she is the one who creates the song that reminds each of us of our essence - of who we are.

Indigenous wisdom asks us to focus not only on what we see in front of us – but the spaces in between – and the contours around it. For many a time according to indigenous wisdom, the atrocity is not the cause but simply a manifestation. The source of the pathology may in fact be the place – the location or the time. Whatever the cause, the source of pathology in society is always said to be due to a fracturing in the natural order of things – a desecration of the laws of Ma’at – the laws of love, harmony, truth, interdependence, interconnectedness, interrelatedness. From Mu-NTU and Ki-NTU, we realise then that we are all as complicit in the wounding, in as much as each and every one of us has the power to heal it. So because from the time-space principle of Ubuntu - Ha-NTU we are taught that time and space are one – a fact affirmed by quantum physics – it means that we also have within us the power to heal space, and thus to heal time. However, all of that power is diminished, if we do not allow the rivers to flow.

Indigenous Knowledge Systems and Western Science With the indigenous worldview there is no separation between matter and spirit; the individual and community; human and nature. All of existence is an expression of relationships, interactions and balances between energies, powers or spirits. Yin/Yang and Ma’at recognise the relativity and polar relationship of all opposites. They are not absolute categories belonging to different categories, but merely two sides of the same reality. They are extreme ends of a continuum – a single whole. There is thus a unity between them (Ngara, 2017).

Is this at odds with modern Western conceptions of science? According to Bohr (1913), quantum theory also reveals that nature is essentially indivisible, while Heisenberg’s (1927) uncertainty principle shows that an observer [simply by the act of observing] has an effect on the system s/he observes. The [impartial, objective, value-free] observer of Newtonian logic now becomes a participator. The subatomic level of quantum physics has shown that we live in a participatory universe – one of relativity of space and time – one in which all things are inter-connected (Peat, 1987). This demonstrates a unity of opposites. Particles are at once destructible and indestructible; matter is both continuous and discontinuous; force and matter are different aspects of the same phenomenon (Capra, 1975).

The cutting-edge science of the 20th century is finally catching up to eons of indigenous wisdom. Makgadikgadi: The Art and Science of Naming I would like, perhaps, as I wind my way towards the ocean, to take a slight detour back to the Zambezi River. It is said, according to geological sciences – that the rise of the Zambezi from the roots of a miombi tree in Zambia was not its original source. Originally the Zambezi had its origins further south in Botswana in Makgadikgadi – one of the largest salt pans in the world – sitting in the dry plains of the savannah. According to paleogeological research, more than 2 million years ago tectonic activity changed the course of the river, causing it to be diverted towards its current source (Cooke, 1979; Thomas & Shaw, 1988). South Africa's Limpopo and Orange Rivers also had ancient roots within these pans (Thomas & Shaw, 1988).

Not being a Setswana speaker, I did not know what the name Makgadikgadi meant, and cast my net out to those who would know how to seek the answer. I received a number of responses. For one Makgadikgadi meant “a pan or open space. Another definition given was “a pace of dryness or a place that is forever dry”. Yet another response was “dry lakes or dams where the sediment is salty which animals lick when the dams run dry”. I was told that Makgadikgadi is “the mother of all dryings” – given the gendered prefix of ‘ma’. For another it was “many, many dryings” – given the plural prefix of ‘ma’. Another tied it to the feminine principle of with the root of the word ‘kgadi’ and drying with the word ‘kgala’ – thus implying the drying of the feminine principle.

Drawing these definitions together shows that that when the indigenous peoples named the place, they included the science, geology, history, and cosmology in it. The indigenous people thus had access to ancient geological knowledge from more than 2 million years ago without the instruments of modern science and technology.

What is more interesting – is that it is in these places of great, great dryness – Makgadikgadi and Kgalagadi – that the First Nations people of Southern Africa, the Khoisan, themselves diminishing with their knowledge, are congregated today. Why?

In realising how the indigenous people name, what does this say about how we name the past present and future? How do we name ourselves and what is the energy it sets within our DNA? How do we name the other and what is the effect it manifests? How do we name our experiences – be they individual or collective - and thus the possibilities for stagnation, regression or transformation? In as much as indigenous wisdom names the history, how do we as per-sons name the future we wish to bring into being?

Following the Way of the River In indigenous wisdom, we are taught that the fabric of society is woven by small interconnected actions. We are thus all simultaneously teachers and learners - crafting a new way of seeing, doing and being. To the sages, truth and re-conciliation are the paths towards restoration of the natural order – the Neter order of Ma’at. This is the path towards harmony and balance – lightening the heart so it weighs up against a feather. This is the riverine way.

To engage IKS requires us to take a different view – to take a different stance so we can see the codes of the universe from another angle. How can we, like the Niger and the Nile, seek to draw on the wellsprings of knowledge to serve the deserts within our souls – and the wilderness in our communities? How can we, like the Nile, not wait for

rain from above in the arid, barren wilderness – but allow the sacred knowledge that resides within all of us – that which we have carried through the long journey of generations of ancestry, from rain in a distal place – emerge from below and flood in spring time bringing fertility that will help us to nourish the future? How can we, like the Zambezi, seek to find other sources of healing waters when the original runs dry – sources that will lead to thundering wonders like Mosi oa Tunya? How can we, like the Congo, find the codes to the deepest healing, in our deepest wounds?

The river is only one tiny aspect of Neter – and therefore one tiny aspect of indigenous knowledge. But the river reflects the sun – the masculine principle - by day. And it reflects the moon – the mother principle - by night. Perhaps the way of the river is the course less travelled. It is the route filled with jutting rocks and thorny brambles. At times it finds itself choking and overgrown in the depths of the rainforest, and other times charts a tedious path in arid sparseness of the desert. Yet the meandering river is filled with possibilities. Possibilities for creativity and innovation. Possibilities for reconciliation and transformation. Possibilities for healing and restoration.

Thokozani, Camagu, Tatenda!

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