

Appropriating and Exploiting Dreams as Technology in *Kgašane*'s Narrative of Conversion

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Abstract

The study of mission history is seldom reported through imaginative literature, drama in particular, and dreams as a technique to justify conversion into Christianity. This article is based on a literary work, *Kgašane*, named after a Molobedu kinsman who is credited with sowing the seeds of Christianity in Bolobedu and the establishment of the Medingen Mission station of the Berlin Missionary Society. The article examines how the writer, Makwala, uses dreams as a divine revelation; an agency used to convert Kgashane. Though fictional, the narrative concerns itself with a factual tale that has dominated the Lutheran Church in the Northern Transvaal. The dreams represent various instances of multivocality and heteroglossia that this article hopes to unravel. The article uses an Afrocentric approach to the study of dreams, with touches of Jung as part of the theoretical framework. The design of the article is qualitative, using purposively selected literary works as secondary data. The choice of the work, *Kgašane*, is informed by the topical nature of its content within the Berlin Missionary Society and its application as the first written narrative to explain the story of a local martyr within the Medingen Mission.

Keywords: dreams; Kgašane/Kgashane; divine revelation; conversion; Afrocentricity; Jung; divine promise; apocalypse; eschatology

Introduction

The turn of the 19th century marked the climax of colonial expansion into the Northern Transvaal, a province in pre-democratic South Africa. Tied to this was the incursion of missionary work as its corollary; to eradicate African customs and traditions. Such movements as the Berlin Missionary Society (BMS) penetrated various Black communities. Most converts used divine revelation to explain their religious change and



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their adoption of the encroaching faiths. These narratives of divine revelation have received little scholarly attention, as they occurred in the remote Northern Transvaal.

This article probes into an aspect of Kgashane's conversion story, namely the tapestry of his dreams, which Makwala (1958) dramatises in his play, *Kgašane*, as having reinforced his conversion to Christianity. The story of Kgashane Mamatlepa, the protagonist in the play, is part of the BMS civilising mission, accounting for his spiritual journey and conversion by using dreams as agency for revelation. Makwala's (1958) dramatic work, *Kgašane*, describes the exploits of the main character, Kgashane, who goes out to Port Elizabeth with his peers to work for a gun. The writer, Makwala, plunges the reader into a compound where Kgashane and his mates live. This text is part of the early writings in Sepedi literature, whose purpose was to advance the role of the church in education. The play, *Kgašane*, captures mission history in an imaginative form, telling the history of Christianity and the establishment of the Medingen Mission in Bolobedu. Unlike most scholarly work on the history of the Northern Transvaal, the writer chooses fiction to portray the incursion of the White rule into Bolobedu country, and the church's role in advancing the colonial mission to eradicate "darkness" and advance the "light." The *Kgašane* narrative is a special voice from the converted, telling the journey of their forebearers. As part of the civilising mission, Kgashane's life is crafted to portray a hero who challenges African lifestyles and beliefs and eventually dies in defence of the church. This article, therefore, examines dreams as agency to conversion. In addition, dreams in this article are explored as representations of various instances of multivocality, heteroglossia and tools for control, as well as subjugation. It is further argued that Kgashane's conversion is part of the "civilising" mission that has colonial overtones of cultural eradication and erasure.

Based on a literary work, *Kgašane*, the main character and the historical person (Kgashane), is credited for sowing the seeds of Christianity in Bolobedu and the establishment of the Medingen Mission station of the BMS. This article examines how the writer, Makwala, uses dreams as divine revelation, an agency that Kgashane (both as a character in the story and in real life) uses to forsake his Khelobedu culture and embrace the new way. Like most early converts and martyrs, Kgashane's conversion is expressed through divine revelation, which is connected with divine literacy. Hofmeyer (2011, 136) explores the various ways in which divine literacy is used to authenticate belief and religious conviction. These divine literacy texts are revealed in visions. Hofmeyer (2011, 396) opines that these revelations are often used by those in the margins to "authorise themselves and to gain spiritual authority." The dreams represent various instances of multivocality and heteroglossia that this article hopes to unravel. These concepts are drawn from post-structuralist scholars such as Mikhael Bakhtin (2014) and Julia Kristeva (1966; 1980), who have undoubtedly influenced any study of textual relations.

The article situates the debate of Khashane's dream conversion on Afrocentricity, with influences from Jung's theoretical model. The design of the article is qualitative, using

a literary work as primary data. The choice of the work is informed by the topical nature of its content within the BMS, and its application as the first written narrative in Sepedi to explain the story of a local martyr within the Medingen Mission. The name *Kgašane* has its equivalent, Kgashane, used in other literature in contrast to *Kgašane* used in Makwala's work. We have preferred to use the name Kgašane in Makwala (1958) to refer to the literary work and reserved Kgashane to be strictly used for the historical, unless otherwise quoted from another source in that spelling. To avoid confusion, *Kgašane* will refer to the historical drama, and the title will follow the usual convention of using italics.

Kgashane's Narrative Myth: An Introduction to the Story of Kgashane Mamatlepa

The story of Kgashane Mamatlepa (Jr) is told to be believed as a true historical account of a Molobedu who brought Christianity into Bolobedu. He was born in a Balobedu tribe in 1846 and was named after his father, Kgashane Mamatlepa (Sr). Consequently, he was designated to succeed his father as a tribal leader in the head kraal, Modunbeng. In late 1868, Kgashane (Jr) and other young men walked from Bolobedu¹ (Duiwelskloof) to Port Elizabeth in the Cape Colony to buy firearms that could be used to defend themselves during inter-tribal wars. When Kgashane and his friends reached Port Elizabeth, they encountered devoted Lutheran Christians. One of these Christians, Peka Napondo, became a friend of Kgashane Mamatlepa (Jr). Peka Napondo told Kgashane (Jr) that he should become a Christian and return to his home to teach the gospel. Apparently, "Kgašane fled into the bush and stayed there for some time as he was moved by Napondo's words" (Mashale 2009, 34). When he returned, he told Peka:

"You have stabbed my heart with an assegai which I can't pull out again. You must help me to become a Christian" (Makwala 1958, 5). Thereafter, Kgašane Mamatlepa (Jr) enrolled in baptism classes in Port Elizabeth. In 1870, after passing the prescribed test, he was baptised and named Johannes Kgašane Mamatlepa by Reverend Keizer (Makwala 1958). Keizer was one of the missionaries employed by the Berlin Missionary Society who held Christian sermons for the mineworkers. (Mashale 2009, 34–35)

When Johannes Kgashane and his friends were ready to return to Bolobedu, one of them suggested that they go to Kimberley, where diamonds had been found to earn more money before they returned home. In response, Johannes Kgashane took a New Testament, which Peka Napondo gave him from his pocket, and said: "This is my diamond. Let's go home" (Makwala 1958, 7). When he arrived home, his father was too old to occupy his leadership position. He was expected to immediately take over his

1 Bolobedu refers to the area previously ruled by the Rain Queen Modjadji. The people (Balobedu tribe) speak a distinct language called Khelobedu. It is here where Kgashane first brought Berlin Missionary Society missionaries to establish Medingen Mission. Kgashane was the son of the Modubeng *kgošana*, named Kgashane Mamatlepa. Khashane, the convert, shared a similar name with his father, Kgashane Mamatlepa.

father's duties. Subsequently, he was inaugurated as a kgošana² and leader of the Balobedu at Modubeng. However, because of his “new” religious convictions, he soon started refusing to abide by all the Induna's traditions. He tried to explain the message of the New Testament to his parents, but they did not approve of the content he attempted to convey. Amongst other things, the New Testament instructs people to accept Jesus Christ as the Lord and Saviour and to worship him as God. It objects to ancestor veneration and polygamy, among other African traditional practices, and in this respect, represents a direct opposite of the African traditional religion. To Johannes Kgashane, the New Testament was a source of new-found wisdom (Makwala 1958). Thus, he is single-handedly accredited for the arrival of the White missionaries and the establishment of the Medingen Mission station. The establishment of the Medingen Mission station in Bolobedu occurred because of missionary work during the 1860s and 1870s (Mashale 2009).

The Berlin Missionary Society in the Northern Transvaal in the Context of the Zuid Afrikaansche Republiek (ZAR)

The Dutch Reformed Mission was the first to do mission work among the Vhavenda people of South Africa under the missionary Alexander MacKidd, who founded the first mission station (Goedgedacht) for Blacks of Soutpansberg in 1863 (Khorommbi 1996, 39). In the same period, the Berlin Missionary Society settled in Sekhukhuneland, first in Boleu, then in Kgalatlou, before they were forcibly driven out to Bochabelo. In 1824, Johannes Janicke and nine other men in Germany convened, intending to form a new society that would help the mission work. Janicke started a theological school to train evangelists to go out and spread the gospel to “the heathens” in South Africa, East Africa, and China (Khorommbi 1996, 40). In essence, the missionaries were sent to preach the gospel to a people classified as a “heathen population” who needed elementary education as a subsidiary to evangelisation (Horell 1963; Jones J. C. 2013; Masumbe and Coetzer 2002).

The term “heathen(s)” —derogatory as it is—was applied to Africans and their belief systems. The term embraced African practices such as rituals, *dinaka*, playing *meropa*, drinking traditional beer, and *dikoma* (Mashale 2009). The term in its Sepedi translation features prominently in the Lutheran hymns that persuade potential converts to move from “darkness” to the “light.” Missionaries regarded (Black) African people as “backward,” rural, indolent, and barbaric and, consequently, considered their ways of life as uncivilised and, therefore, unacceptable and largely inferior (Akombo et al. 2020, 214). All those who believed otherwise, contrary to the Christian faith, were demonised. Thus, missionaries' endeavours strove to “Westernise” or “civilise” Africans by imposing a version of the European way of life (Comaroff and Comaroff 1986, 14; Mokgoatšana 2021, 14). In their view, to “civilise” refers to raising Africans from

2 Kgošana can loosely be defined as a subordinate chief. As such, he would rule his village of Modubeng and refer major cases to Kgoši Masalanabo, who was the paramount of the Bolobedu villages.

barbarism and savagery to an enlightened, civilised culture of Western nations. Mokgoatšana (2021) emphatically states that Europeans entered Africa under the guise of a civilising mission, but in fact, to colonise and expand the empire. In effect, this implied that the existing African value system had to be surrendered to a Western value system (Mashale 2009). Interestingly, the missionaries' focus was mainly on Black indigenous people and not so much on White people.

On the epistemological and pedagogical dimensions, historical and narratological distortions in the writings of European missionaries like Mönnig (1967); Krige and Krige (1943; 1954; 1980), and Fritz Reuter (Mahashe 2012), among others, gave credence to the fact that colonial ideology accompanied Christianity as a means of imperialism (Bopape 1998). For this reason, their writings about Africa and Africans should be viewed with caution and even suspicion. Most, if not all missionaries, who documented narratives about Africa and Africans either gravitated towards the misrepresentation of the truth or deliberately ignored the voice of the indigenes for religious purposes. In this way, Christianity took it as its sole mandate to undermine and suppress the culture of Africans in general and Balobedu in particular. Undergirding this mandate was the missionaries' belief that Balobedu, as other indigenes elsewhere in Africa, were barbarians and savages in need of cleansing and redemption from their primitive culture. Kgashane's adoption and subsequent promotion of the Christian faith, as well as his collaboration with BMS against his people, dealt the Balobedu people a serious blow. Although it is tempting to provide an exhaustive treatise on Kgashane as a traitor of his people instead of a martyr, such a discussion deserves an independent paper. Of particular interest in this article is Kgashane's narrative myth—one that comes across as too "educative" and whose events are treated in a bewildered or manipulative fashion, whilst Christians amorously monumentalise the historical figure himself. It is not the intention of this article to provide an exhaustive treatise on Kgashane, but to probe into an aspect of his conversion story, namely, the tapestry of his dreams, which Makwala (1958) dramatises in his play, *Kgašane*, as having reinforced his conversion to Christianity (Bopape 1998). Perhaps, before the probe, it is imperative to summarise the theoretical lynchpin of this article.

Theoretical Framing of Dreams

Theories concerning dreams, dreaming and dream interpretation in Western psychology have been influenced by their respective epistemological bases (Schweitzer 1983). For instance, the Freudian, Jungian, and phenomenological approaches to dream interpretation are difficult to apply when one wants to understand and interpret dreams in the African context. Freud is an authority on dreams and visions and, as such, has informed the varied interpretation of dreams across cultures. His view on dreams focuses on the unconscious, arguing that unresolved tensions in the unconscious are important to understand the meaning of dreams. He divided dreams into latent and manifest dreams (Freud 1900, 22), and according to Freud (1900), sources of dreams include stimuli from the external world, subjective experiences, organic stimuli within

the body, and mental activities during sleep. His concepts of conversion and the “day’s residues” are significant to understanding the content of dreams. The notions of autobiographical memory come in handy to explain these residues as memory and information for and about our own experiences (Conway and Pleydell-Pearce 2000, 261). Because of its connection with memory, a dream interpretation requires us to examine reflections of the past since the external influences of the dreamer, as such, go deeper into the unconscious. Sigmund Freud’s classical work *Interpretation of dreams* has been dominant in understanding the place of dreams in a person’s life. For him, dreams represent a person’s struggle to understand own challenges. Through a dream, one can reconnect with the troubled past. Freud considered dreams to be expressions of unfulfilled wishes and a royal road to the unconscious (Zang and Gou 2018).

A contemporary psychoanalyst, Emmanuel Ghent (Jones J. W. 2013, 67), argues for a distinction between “submission” and “surrender.” To him, submission is more like “what Fromm describes as masochistic, and self-defeating,” whereas “surrender involves the choice to give oneself to a powerful aesthetic, romantic or spiritual experience” (Jones, J. W. 2013, 67). The act of surrender or conversion depends largely on an idealisation of a trusted figure that transcends one’s ego, thus, weakening the “normal ego boundaries and the grip of objectifying mentation” (Jones, J. W. 2013, 103). Surrender and conversion are considered synonymous acts. Explaining these notions, Ghent draws from Freud’s parallels of child dependency on its father, to dependency upon God. To Freud, Ghent (cited by Jones, J. W. 2013, 17) argues, religion’s derivation is from the infant’s helplessness and the longing for the father. Freud considered religion to be consisting of narcissistic, infantile wishes and dependencies. Freud dismissed the idea of an enormously exalted father who can understand the needs of children and men “as patently infantile and foreign to reality” (Jones, J. W. 2013, 17).

Freud’s theory focuses on the three-pronged notions of the *id* (the unconscious), *superego* (the conscience) and the *ego* (rationale). His further ideas about repression, conversion and the phallus, the libido and the oedipal complex are necessary to interpret Kgashane’s conversion from traditional religion to Christianity. He reduces consciousness to psychic acts that are derived from unconscious drives or instincts. Applied within the cosmology of Balobedu, the Freudian approach with its reductionist propensity will have limitations when applied to Balobedu; however, some of its tenets will apply. This is so because, for Balobedu, dreams are inherently meaningful and cannot be reduced to a single construct in the wish-fulfilment hypothesis or some other abstract model (Schweitzer 1983). For Balobedu, the meaning and interpretation of dreams are based on world-life experiences. The Jungian approach (named after Carl Jung) challenges Freud’s position on dreams and dream interpretation but falls prey to Descartes’ conception in its formulation on one level. The Jungian approach condenses psyche and psychic mechanisms and highlights a distinction between consciousness, the personal unconscious, and a collective unconscious (Schweitzer 1983). According to Jung (Von der Heydt, in Ryce-Minuhin 1994, 12), a human being is born as a totality

combining the physiological and the psychological, with a centre defined as the “Self.” This centre is where the image of God is located. In Jung’s theory, human beings are instruments through which the divine finds self-reflection.

Concerning an indigenous understanding of dreams, Jung’s epistemological basis cannot entirely be applied to deal with Khelobedu dreams; however, Jung’s insistence on the divine interpretation of dreams, and the dreams’ propensity to be futuristic, make his theory relatively close to the African-centred approaches that have spirituality as an important kernel. To this end, the Afrocentric theory will be used with elements borrowed from Jung to enrich the debate on dreams and how they were used as an agency to convert Kgashane.

Unlike his predecessor and mentor, Jung’s approach to dreams is futuristic, using dreams to contemplate solutions for the future and to explain how the future is likely to be. In his understanding, Jung believes dreams have their roots in conscious content and the constellated unconscious contents. Jung raised fundamental questions about religion and psychology. These questions were self-reflective because they influenced him with equal intensity. Among his critical questions, Jung related his openness to immediate numinous experiences about dreams and visions with religious overtones; that he was aware of their significance. Jung defined “immediate numinous experience” as a happening that bestows sudden insight into another dimension and affects one’s whole being. In a sense, dreams not only foreshadow one’s mental and emotional development but have transcendental potential. Other than Freud, who connects dreams to inhibited sexual drives, Jung connects dreams to religion. Because of this, Von der Heydt (1994, 7) maintains that Jung saw dreams as manifestations that came from God, and it was important for him to make sense of them.

In Freud’s psychoanalysis, dreams have no divine interpretation but a humanistic view to deal with the unconscious. In support of this, Hayashida (1999b, 28) claims Freud saw no validity in divine or spiritual revelation through dreams. Unlike Freud, Jung believed in the influence of the external world, affirming the possibility of the spiritual realm. Jung’s belief that there is a religious dimension in the psyche was a source of friction between him and Freud. While Freud emphasised the consequences of sexual repression, Jung was concerned with the damage to human beings when the religious impulse is neglected (Von der Heydt 1994, 10). To Jung, dreams need to be seen for what they are, not standing for, not as symbols of something. In this manner, the conscious and the unconscious are intricately interwoven to create a tapestry of messages that influence the dreamer’s life going forward. Explaining the place of dreams in a person’s life, Hayashida (1999b) boldly asserts that “the dream comes almost as a gift—a natural occurrence when the will and the consciousness are largely extinguished.”

Having discussed the Freudian and Jungian theories of the psychology of dreams, we seek an approach to dreams that necessarily reflects an epistemological base, essential

features of which denote African cosmology in its interdependence, continuity, and unbroken existence.

To this end, this article is located within the realm of Afrocentricity because it premises its argument on the submission that Africa and Africans should be understood within the African context through African epistemological lenses. Chawane (2016, 78) proffers that Afrocentricity proposes that Blacks (at home and abroad) ought to consider knowledge from an African perspective. Afrocentricity recommends viewing matters at hand from an African vantage point; that Africa is misunderstood when viewpoints and terms other than those of the African are used to study Africa (Chawane 2016; Mokgoatšana 1999). In line with this view, Mudyiwa and Mokgoatšana (2021) contend that without understanding the cosmological world that informs the interpretation of reality in Africa, theorising about Africa often displaces the ethnographic constructions of the community in question. Furthermore, they argue that Afrocentricity provides the prism to understand the culture in its totality, recognising the place of (w)holiness, indivisibility and the interwovenness of aspects of reality. Consequently, when Africans view themselves as centred and central in their historical narratives, they perceive themselves as agents, actors, and participants rather than as marginal and on the periphery of political or economic experience (Chawane 2016, 78). Viewing the narrative myth of Kgashane through the Afrocentric prism enables the authors to challenge the Eurocentric narrations about Balobedu and their culture. Balobedu will be positioned as the centre of articulation of their African-centred values and standards as Afrocentrists advocate (Asante 1990; Asante 2017; Mokgoatšana 2020; Shai 2021). Furthermore, Kgashane's dreams and conversion ought to be viewed within the Afrocentric framework, which permits African issues to be centred on African culture, history, and values. In this way, the narrative will be well-positioned to foster epistemic and pedagogical justice in the interpretation and understanding of Kgashane's narrative myth on his dreams and conversion, which have for a long time been read through alien epistemological lenses (Nabudere 2012).

Writing on the significance and place of dreams in society, Chimombo (1989, 50) opines: "They were seen as an important mode of communication in which spiritual beings impart knowledge, advise, warn, instruct or even reveal themselves to the living. Dreams link to spirit and ordinary man." Implicit in the preceding quotation is the idea that dreams function as the gateway to understanding people's spirituality and relationship with the spirit world (Potgieter, Van der Walt, and Wolhuter 2009). For people like Balobedu, who believe that dreams have a particular function in their lives other than some kind of repository for information received during waking hours, dreams present information necessary for the dreamer to function successfully within the world in which he or she lives (Ball 2003).

When Young and Hetherwick (in Chimombo 1989, 50) enquired about the origin of dreams in Malawian society, the two missionaries were told that a dream was a "spirit of a dead ancestor which comes to the dreamer with a message, either a warning or

simply making his/her presence known to the descendant.” Young’s interviewees went to great lengths to explain the importance of dreams and the need for their interpretation. Should the dreamer fail to understand the dream, the responsibility rests with the elders, who, through various referrals, would work hard to interpret the content and meaning of the dream. Chimombo (1989, 50) posits that “interpretation depends not only on the dreamer and his context but also on the dream and content.” It should be stated without doubt that the Khelobedu explanation of dreams is similar to the Malawian experience, as both share a common cosmology and metaphysical explications.

Missionaries and Western-oriented theologians castigate Africans for their use of dreams, relegating dreams to be the devil’s workshop, failing to understand the position of dreams in the religious conception of reality and how it is ordered. Hayashida (1999b, 6) explicitly argues that “to deny Africans the right to draw from their rich reservoir of tradition and spiritual awareness is to deny them their place in the concretisation of their Christian faith under their roof.” Hofmeyer (2011, 136) argues that dream technology is used as the “power of prophetic voice and vision as a form of religious authority.” As the authority, a dream is accepted as a voice from the supernatural, an authoritative voice that commands, directs, and gives direction as to what should happen. Dream texts are seldom viewed with suspicion but taken as messages from the other world. In many parts of Africa, however, dreams are less about powerlessness and more a routine technique of religious life where they are generally considered to be oracular messages from heaven, or the ancestors, or both.

In Mahashe’s (2019, 120) view, the concept of a dream has to be interpreted within the *Thugula* complex of the Balobedu. *Thugula* is the shrine, a spiritual site to speak to ancestors. Here dreams are considered sacred messages from the ancestors; to be precise, a dream is a *taelo*. Etymologically, the noun *taelo* is an impersonal, deverbative noun derived from the verb stem *laya* with several conjugations, including *laela*. The idea of *go laya* means to instruct, to lay down the law, or to initiate action. The *-ela* extension in Sepedi and Khelobedu morphology has two corresponding meanings, viz., “to do something on behalf of another” or “to do something against someone’s will” and lastly, “to act in a particular direction.” This laborious morphology is used here to explain the idea of *taelo* as an authoritative script that commands the dreamer what to do in line with the message from the dream text. Although the first two meanings are contradictory, they point to the power of the agent who either uses mercy or authoritative power. This power is an external force, which is located outside the terrain of the victim or recipient. These messages are transferred and implemented in compliance with the contents of the dream. That *-ela* points to direction finds its true expression when one considers that dreams are seen as messages from the supernatural world to the physical world. These messages are transported through dreams as mediums and passed down to the relevant recipients who should implement the dream instruction or advice.

In Touch with the Unconscious: Interpreting Dreams as Prior Texts

This section will examine the four dreams used as divine revelation to convert Kgashane to Christianity. The four dreams appear to Kgashane like slides in a film, in the same order throughout the night. His conversion to Christianity seems predetermined in various ways. The writer deliberately places Kgashane among Christian inmates, preparing the main character to be subjected to endless sermons without an alternative. We are rarely, if at all, allowed to see the non-Christian world in the compound, but see only his Christian friends and the minister who frequently visits the compound. In this environment, Kgashane is overpowered and finally gives in. The writer uses the dream infrastructure as an agency to convert Kgashane from traditional religion to the Christian faith.

After days of persuasion and Kgashane's stubbornness, he disappears for three nights. He is embossed with three dreams in the same chronology, envisioning mortals in the form of the congregation, and finally, a fourth dream appears to him like the veil of the supernatural being. In a usual Christian semiology, the dreams have the magical number 3 as a central motif. This figuration will be explained thoroughly where the fourth dream is discussed. It will be shown how these dreams are constructed like overlays, interwoven to produce a string of spiritual messages echoing each other from a series of texts. Each of the dreams will be explained and related to other intertextual elements to determine the power of the multiple voices.

The First Dream

In the first dream, Kgashane sees a congregation dressed in white singing the hymn. In his words, he says:

*Ke lorile phuthego ye e aperego mašela a mašweu e opela:
E a botilego Modimo fela
O tlo imollwa, a phela. (Makwala 1958, 29)*
[I dreamt of a congregation dressed in white garments, singing:
He who trusts only in the Lord
Will be relieved, and live.]

This dream creates a picturesque, heavenly landscape populated by those converted, distinguished by their white apparel, an image which Jung would describe as a big dream. The song privileges the centrality of the Christian God against African cosmology. In this context, the singers celebrate their belief in monotheistic religion, which is associated with their affliction, giving them a good life without hardships. The idea of divine promise (McComiskey 2019, 55), which is fulfilled through eternal life, is echoed in the hymn by indirect reference. The writer deliberately puns on the words *fela* (only) and *phela* (shall live), which are parallels that effectively produce a false rhyme scheme that does not appeal to the ear but the eye. Of importance is the final linking, using the words *fela/phela*. The two words expose the writer's Christian sensibilities and notions of eternal life as well as belief in one God. Whereas the word

fela in the text means “God only”, it, however, has overtones of “no other,” which are implied in African religions with their prevalence of several deities. It is the Hebrew/Christian God’s declaration that besides him, there is no other (Isaiah 42:8; Isaiah 43:10–15).³ Outside the dream world, Kgashane has to choose between his ancestors and the Christian God, who is introduced as a supernatural who works alone.

The content of the first dream is a message of promise consisting of three important parts:

- a) Stating the condition that *e a botilego Modimo fela* (one who trusts only in the Lord).
- b) Promise to be fulfilled *o tla imollwa* (he shall be relieved).
- c) The resultant gift; *a phela* (will live).

The dream states a clear condition, an undivided trust in the Lord, for the promise to be realised. Trust in the Lord is not enough; forsaking all other deities is presupposed in the message. This is in line with Christian teachings that “You shall have no other gods besides me” (Ex 20:3). The same message is echoed in various sources such as Ex 20,23; Deut 5,7; Deut 6,5,14 condemning the syncretism of other communities that are polytheistic as the Syrians, Egyptians, and Ethiopians. The dream is a subtle condemnation of the Balobedu religious practices, which honour their ancestors and God at the same time.

Kgashane is warned before conversion of the great risk before him that accepting the Christian faith and upholding his cultural rites would be intolerable. Although the Christian teaching forbids syncretism, recent studies note that African Independent Churches (AICs) are currently employing a syncretic approach to Judeo-Christianity (Mlambo and Mukahlera 2014; Munyai 2016). In examining AICs’ conceptualisation of Deity and the place of humanity in the universe, Mlambo and Mukahlera (2014) and Munyai (2016) note the tenacity and innovative originality of AICs in the context of a congested and contested religious space where Western Christianity has obliterated, with some degree of success, African cultural and religious beliefs to substitute them with foreign ones. In this way, “AICs represent the African classical example of religious institutions, which protect some fundamental elements of original African religious thought and spirituality within modern trends of worship” (Mlambo and Mukahlera 2014, 80). Seemingly, these churches realised that the introduction, spread, and growth of Christianity went hand in glove with the process of acculturation of Judeo-Christianity to the colonist order in Africa. Thus, they assume an antagonist stance to combat the erosion of African traditional religion. This is important because Christian missions instilled in Africans (who converted to Western-type churches) a distaste for traditional African values (Mlambo and Mukahlera 2014, 82). Therefore,

3 All Bible texts are from *The Holy Bible* (New King James Version) 1982.

AICs developed various attitudes and approaches to religion without having to conform to the boundaries of missionary orthodoxy.

In short, the first dream reveals to Kgashane the need to trust in the Lord and to abandon his other deities connected with him. Okeke (2021, 86) clearly distinguishes adhesion from conversion when he says, “conversion implies a deliberate turning from an earlier deity to another while adhesion allows a believer to adopt new worship as a supplement to his former beliefs.” He has a promise of redemption expressed in *o tlo imollwa* (he will be relieved; that is redeemed). The idea of *go imollwa* is suggestive of cumbersome burden sins, which, unless washed away, will deny him the eternal life promised. Redemption is dependent on conversion and forsaking one’s traditional beliefs.

The Second Dream

The second dream is a sequel to the first one that unveils the congregation singing songs of praise, and now the voice of a priest is revealed to Kgashane. The sermon foregrounds to Kgashane the Last Day, that is, the Day of Judgment, and what will happen:

Go madimabe batho ba be sa sokologago
Gobane madulo a makgethwa ba ka se
A bone ka tšatši la bofelo.
[Condemned are those who are not converted
For the holy place they shall
Not see on the last day.]

The dream represents what, in religious terms, is a revelation. Defining the concept of “revelation,” the *Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy* (2020) explains that “revelation” (lat. *revelatio*) is a translation of the Greek word *apokalypsis*, which means the removal of a veil so that something can be seen. The Greek apocalypse is also drawn directly from the Hebrew word *gala*. To speak of revealing is to assume certain associated meanings such as “hidden,” “concealed” or that something is not open or manifest. The idea of revelation, therefore, conjures up semantic dimensions of removing the veil, opening up, laying bare, bringing to sight, and many other semantic associations. In a religious sense, revelation speaks to the witness of an ancestor, a creator, a spirit, or some deity. It talks to bringing into sight that which was previously hidden, which may be the doctrine of knowledge, a religious revelation of new knowledge, a new faith, or disclosure of a new truth. Revelation may involve the sight of a great Source, God, or an all-powerful force that directs what to do and how it should be done. This creator or source is the central subject of the fourth dream, to which we will return later.

At its core, the Christian message holds that those who do not believe in Jesus Christ will not only be condemned to eternal death in the future but are already condemned to eternal death (John 3:15–21). It is only those whose names are written in the “Book of Life” or “in heaven” (Luke 10:19; Rev 20) who believed in Jesus Christ alone as their

Lord and Saviour, who would have eternal life. The priest's voice in Kgashane's dream castigates those who do not repent and believe. Although Jesus Christ is not mentioned in the second dream, the allusion is being made to have faith in him and him alone. Those who believe in Jesus Christ are promised "a place" in heaven (John 14:1–6). The priest's voice echoes this promise through the line "*Gobane madulo a makgethwa ba ka se a bone ka tšatši la bofelo,*" meaning: "They will not see [or occupy] the holy place on the last day [of judgment]." The voice of a priest in Kgashane's second dream introduces the ritual of baptism as an instrument for conversion.

The dream draws its inspiration from the biblical symbolism of the apocalypse and Jesus' second coming. This dream is littered with eschatological concepts of *tšatši la bofelo*, that is, the end of times, the end of age, or the last days. By eschatology, we refer to the doctrine of the last things, the last days, or the end of times (Mokgoatšana 2020, 5). Mokgoatšana tellingly quotes Mayemba's definition of eschatology that says:

Generally speaking, eschatology is the theological doctrine of the ultimate things, of the last or final days, of the world to come, of life after death. It is a theological investigation or religious quest about the meaning of the destiny of the world and of human beings. In this sense, eschatology has a teleological dimension. It deals with expectation, with future. Its relevance lies in the belief that not everything about human beings is over after death, that death is not the human being's radical end or absolute destination and that there is something beyond. (Mayemba 2009, 1)

Following this definition, it becomes clear that Kgashane's dream points to the last days and the promise of eternal life at the end of times. This is what Mayemba (2009, 1) means when he says eschatology deals with "expectation." This expectation is connected with the promise of a good after-life revealed to Kgashane in a dream. Tied to this is the notion of eschatological woes, a determinism contemplated in Makwala's words: "*batho ba aba sa sokologago baka se a bone*" [the unrepentant will not see the last day of judgement] (Makwala 1958, 28). In Christian eschatology, Christ is the Eschaton, the end itself. He is described as the *Alfa* and the *Omega*, the beginning and the end. The dream deals with the apocalypse, a revelation of the things to come and what shall happen in the last days. The theme of the apocalypse introduces Kgashane to God and presents him as the ultimate Lord and Saviour of the universe. Collins explains apocalyptic eschatology, as we find in Kgashane's dreams, as an end of time scheme that looks into retribution or judgement beyond the realm of history (Sim 1996, 28). Kgashane has to believe the priest's message in light of the foregoing submissions.

The Third Dream

The singing in the first dream is extended in the third dream with a jubilant atmosphere, with the congregation singing:

Tlang bjalo go Morena
Sokologang dibeng! (Makwala 1958, 29)
[Come now to the Lord, Repent from your sins!]

This dream is a restatement, a kind of dialogism where a prior text is echoed. It represents a heteroglossic referencing, a double voicing of Hymn 166 from *Difela tša kereke tše di nago dinota tša tonic sol. fa (Difela)*: The resemblance between the first verse and the dream constitutes an intertextual relation that is striking:

*Tlang bjalo go Morena,
Sokologang dibeng!* [My emphasis]
Le boeleng go yena
E a le bopilego.
[Come now to the Lord,
Repent from your sins
And return to him
He that created you.]

This act of pluralism and multi-vocality is a clear indication that Kgashane was addressed from all ends by the same content. Not only are his friends singing the songs to him, but their attempts to convert him seem to have been a paraphrasing of the hymns and repeated actions and singing. The dream comes as a reappearance, a reduplication of the earlier text. Here the meeting of the conscious and the unconscious recreates a mental picture that haunts Kgashane to finally surrender himself to the pressure to convert.

In the third dream, Kgashane is addressed through an invocation, a voice that not only addresses him but all those who have not repented, all those who have not converted to Christianity to advance to “*Morena*”; a name translatable to the King of Kings, although it is frequently accepted as the Lord. In African parlance, *Morena* is in control of the land and its connection with the spirit world. Its translation from Lord to *Morena* conjures up such connotations as one who is above all, the Supreme Being who oversees all and cares for the universe. In this sense, the voice from *Morena* as the apical ancestor is *taelo*; a directive, a commanding voice that cannot be violated. *Taelo*, as a voice from the ancestor of the creator, may not be neglected without consequences. This *Taelo* is also an invitation from the first verse in Hymn 166 from the Bapedi Lutheran Church Hymn Book called: *Difela tša kereke tše di nago dinota tša tonic sol. fa (Difela)* [Church hymns with staff notation and tonic solfa (my translation)] as explained earlier.

This discussion shows that missionary zeal, premised on the need for all Africans to shed their faith in favour of the Christian religion, became the dominant focus of the church. As indicated in the previous section, a positive response to this zeal entails “turning away from sin,” i.e., African traditional religion and its attendant sociocultural philosophies, and embracing nothing else but the teachings of Jesus Christ. The writer, Makwala, employs silences and omissions to foreground the Christian world and its bliss, thus creating competing forces of light to prevail against darkness, sometimes described as a wilderness, as shall be seen in Kgashane’s second wife’s interaction with the priest, Reuter. The iconography of light and darkness finds parallels in hymn 122 below; by using contrasting parallelism of the words *seetšeng/seheiteneng* (in the

light/among the heathens). The “total” abandonment of African traditional religion and culture is evinced by how the singers are graphically severed from the “sinners’ world” and join in the fervent appeals to the indigenous community to join the new religion. The invocation draws the attention of the people in Kgashane’s traditional world to escape from the Devil and join *Morena*. In the Bible, the Devil is representative of all that is evil, whereas *Morena* symbolises all that is good. African traditional religion is thematised as the Devil’s workshop, whereas the Christian faith is foregrounded as the means of deliverance from that wicked workshop to a life of bliss. It is interesting that the inviting voice is already speaking from the zone where God is positioned. The voice yells “*Tlang*” (Come hither) not “*Eyang!*” Both one-word sentences are in the imperative mood, expressing not only an invitation but a command. *Eyang* (*go [there]*) presupposes that the speaker is not in the vicinity of the destination to which those instructed should go; while *tlang* suggests that not only *Morena* is the host, but they are either hosted or hosts themselves.

The two words create contrasting spatial dimensions, one inside and the other outside. Those inside have satisfied the requirements for entry, such that they are beneficiaries, while those outside still have to satisfy conditions for entry; spelled out without mincing words: “*Sokologang dibeng*” (repent from your sins). The same call is made in Hymn 122, which goes further to say:

*Yo a dumetšego a le seetšeng,
A domestique bitše batho ba seheiteneng
A re: **Tlang** go Jesu e a le tsohang
Gore le phologe, **tlang!**
[One who is in the light and believes
Should call people who are still heathens
And say: Come to Jesus who needs you
To be saved, come!] [My translation]*

The metaphor of the Lord as host is part of the grand theme of the apocalypse alluded to in the second dream. The apocalypse is derived from the Greek word *apokalypsis*, which means the removal of a veil so that something can be seen. The root of the word is *kalypto*, which means “to cover” or “to hide.” A speaking voice reveals himself to Kgashane and reveals what the end of the world shall be. The voice clearly explains that the end is coming and that not everyone shall inherit the benevolence of the Last Day. The speaking voice, the voice of God, warns him of the dangers of disregarding his message of promise. Kgashane has to choose between two roads; one that leads to eternal life or the one that misses the door of heaven. In this dream, a condition to accessing the holy seats and sites is clearly defined through conversion; failing which the candidates’ *ba ka se bone išatši la bofelo* (they will not see the last day). This allegorical narrative is allusive to the Day of Judgement. It is also this day that is inferred in the third dream, where the speaking voice invites Kgashane to be hosted by the Lord and those converted to satisfy the conditions for entry into the kingdom of heaven.

The Fourth Dream

The fourth dream is the culmination of the promises unveiled to Kgashane. All the previous invitations could not reveal who the host was, but the last apparition exposes a celestial human figure, clad in white robes, giving an unequivocal message instructing Kgashane to be baptised. Makwala (1958, 29) paints the picture of the divine revelation in this manner:

*Morago ga fao gwa tšwelela motho yo a apaerego **diaparo tše tšhweu**, a eme **sebakabakeng**, a re: Tsoga o ye go moruti a go kolobetše leineng la Tate le Morwa le Moya-mokgethwa. Ditoro tše di be di ntlela nako ye nngwe le ye nngwe, ge ke robetše, ka go latelana.*

[After that appeared a human figure dressed in white, hovering in the sky who said: Rise up and go to the priest to be baptised in the name of the father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. These dreams appeared to me in the same order whenever I slept.]

An apparition finally puts the nail in the coffin, using complex linguistic strategies to drive the message home. The narrative uses ingenious linguistic repertoire and cogent semiology to persuade the message from the dream. The detailed message and graphical representation in the dream are sufficient divine revelation for Kgashane to receive the divine gift without questioning. Kgashane receives a premonition of a heavenly figure who is immortal. The dream immortalises race and racialises God in the manner in which missionary work has positioned God in Africa.

The fourth dream is not only a gift but also an instruction compelling him to comply. The central message of the dream is captured in the line: *Tsoga o ye go moruti a go kolobetše leineng la Tate le Morwa le Moya-mokgethwa*. The dream has three morphological units with lucid instructions; *tsoga/ o ye go moruti/ a go kolobetše (leineng la Tate le Morwa le Moya-mokgethwa)*. Kgashane has to comply with all three commandments; he has to rise, then go to Reverend Reuter, and be baptised. The manner of baptism is also prescribed; that is, in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Through baptism, Kgashane is invited to be reconciled with the Triune God, to partake in the doxological relationship, and to be connected with Jesus' death and resurrection. The image of the trinity is invoked through various motifs; from the days Kgashane spent in the cold, repetition of the songs, the ritual of baptism, and the directives in the final dream instructing him to be finally baptised.

The ability of the human figure to be positioned high into space creates for the dreamer a tangible spectacle; a supernatural suspension into space, describing without question that the being is immortal. The immortality of the speaking voice suggests indestructibility, permanence, and authoritative power. It is this powerful voice that uses the imperative mood to command "*Tsoga*." This command gives the dream absolute authority over the dreamer. Waking up from his sleep, it is very unlikely that the dreamer may challenge the power and content of the dream, making the dream a voice of the ancestor, the message from God. The structuring of the sentences is very

interesting. From the imperative mood, the writer then uses the subjunctive mood to map a series of actions that should happen:

Tsoga/ 2. o ye go moruti/ 3. a go kolobetše.

Actions 1–3 have to happen in that order for the message to be fulfilled. The third action, *a go kolobetše* is the resultant act purported to happen; however, it cannot be realised unless the conditional act (2) is fulfilled. This message summarises all the other dreams without speaking in parables. The last instruction is expressed in various ways that relate to salvation, redemption, sacrifice, and baptism.

The image of whiteness memorialised and celebrated in the dream is an indirect citation from several Christian hymns, one of which says:

*Me ba emeng godimong ke bomang?
Ba na le phadimo, ba tagile bjang!
Mašela 'mašweu, ke a hlatswitšwego
Mading a Konyana ye e re hwetšeng.
E, mo ba retang ke tlo ba le
Khutšo ye ke e tsomago. (Hymn 340, Difela)
[Who are these standing up there?
They shine and have the glory,
Their white garments are those washed
In the blood of the Lamb who died for us
Oh yes, where they praise I shall have the
Peace that I seek.]*

The image of whiteness is expressed through various conjugations; *ba tagile* (brighter), *a hlatswitšwego* (sparkling clean), racialising Christian spiritual authority with God and angels depicted in white robes. All these immortals with supernatural powers are elevated, hovering in the sky, bright and sparkling. The Christian iconography is chosen to explain not only the spiritual purity and salvation but forgiveness of sins, the gift of life, and redemption. The hymn goes further to speak of these heavenly creatures who are clad in white robes washed in the blood of the Lamb. The semiology of the blood of the Lamb is allegoric of the crucifixion and redemption.

The image of the blood has connotations of salvation. This image amplifies the narrative of baptism in Kgashane's dream to explain an appeal to shed off the old body and embrace the new body to qualify for salvation. The narrative propels Kgashane to accept the Christian faith.

Interpreting Kgashane's Dreams

Understanding Kgashane's dream requires the reader to interpret the sediment of prior texts, previous discourses, and the dream as an enactment and embodiment of messages in the unconscious. These recalls, quotations and restatements clearly show us that

Kgashane's dreams are mere repetitions of the messages passed down to him before he disappeared for three days. What is expressed as a dream is an imprint in his mind, something he was subjected to. The question is, if he were not subjected to these hymns and preaching, what would have been the content of his dreams? We can safely argue that he was haunted by what was already a residue in the unconscious.

In Christian semiology, the number three carries the message of the trinity, the triune, and other related meanings and varied interpretations. Thus, the number three symbolises the harmony and completeness of the Godhead in the Bible. The number three is also symbolic of eternal life in the Bible, as Jesus Christ is believed to have been resurrected three days after his death. In the African context, particularly in the Igbo society of Nigeria, the number three signifies "strength" (Udechukwu 2019). Viewing Kgashane's narrative of conversion to Christianity in light of what the number three means in that context, compels one to consider these implications:

- a) Kgashane's disappearance for three days/nights conveniently parallels Jesus Christ's death, which was also symbolised by Jonah being in the belly of the fish for three days and three nights (Matthew 12:40).
- b) The repetition of the same dream thrice is meant to emphatically denote that Kgashane had indeed met the true God in his completeness and that the invitation to believe in the Christian God was so serious that it had to be reinforced thrice for him to deem it as legitimate. This parallels the story where Jesus asked Simon Peter three times if he loved him (John 21:15–16), to which Simon Peter responded generally in the affirmative. Simon's response to the question was meant to probe his willingness to abandon his former life and follow Jesus wholeheartedly henceforth. By implication, Jesus asked Simon the same question thrice, and Simon responding to it thrice depicts the idea that his "faith" had attained completeness, and that he would never return to a life that contradicts his faith in Jesus.
- c) Kgashane's three dreams where he encounters mortals, congregation ↔ priest ↔ congregation (except the fourth dream featuring the immortal being) endorse the Christian clergy's "Great Commission" (Matthew 28:16–20). According to the Great Commission, believers of Jesus Christ are supposed to go to the whole world and make disciples (followers of Jesus Christ) of all nations. The priest's connection with the church symbolises the body of Christ and the congregation (the converted people/Christians) in Kgashane's dreams are positioned as agents of the "divine" transformation that he needs. In the Christian worldview, it is not necessary for Jesus Christ himself or any other immortal being in his circle to meet Kgashane; there are already mortal messengers (priest and congregation) who have "complete" access to the immortal world, enabling them to represent the person, position and power of Jesus Christ. In other words, as far as the Christian worldview is concerned, Kgashane's encounter with the priest and the congregation is tantamount to an encounter with the immortal Jesus Christ. They not only represent Him, but they also carry Him in the person of the Holy Spirit. Suffice to say that when the

priest or members of the congregation invite Kgashane to their faith, God is essentially doing that through them.

- d) The rehearsal of the (Christian) songs/verses three times in the text is meant to reinforce the idea that Kgashane had no choice but to join the Christian faith. That Kgashane was able to identify the songs as “Christian” meant that he had heard them before. The implication of songs as reinforcements of Kgashane’s conversion should be taken in a serious light because, like in the African context, Christians also use songs and hymns to send their message of “salvation.” That Kgashane had to hear Christian songs three times in a dream reinforces the story of his unity with God.

It is fascinating how the number three is subtly implicated in Kgashane’s dreams to justify the narrative that Kgashane’s conversion was “supernatural”; and, therefore, he had no choice but to concede. The dreams had connotations of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus, a steadfast resolution that necessitated turning away from the way of life always known as the “new way of life,” severing ties with kinfolk who are non-Christians and fortifying bonds with Christians and abandoning the African song for the Christian song (message). In the whole process, the indigene’s voice is rarely heard, and if it is heard, it is depicted in a negative light.

It has already been highlighted in the above summation that Kgashane’s dreams are reinforcements of the sermons and songs he had heard in his previous interactions with Christians. This gives the impression that dreams also assume the resurfacing of the unconscious. In her book, *The Complete Book of Dreams and Dreaming*, Pamela Ball (2003) avers that dreams can be the mind’s way of making sense of the various types of input with which it has had to cope. It is unclear whether, in the three days/nights that Kgashane disappeared, he had any sleep or not. Sleep is mentioned here because, according to Ball (2003), human beings need sleep to function successfully. Therefore, it can be said that sleep deprivation has a profound effect on efficiency and ability, and the function of dreams seems to balance the psychological and physiological activity within humans (Ball 2003). Mental and physical breakdown occurs very quickly without the relief of the dreaming process. During the waking hours, the focus of people’s activity is generally geared towards the external and conscious. In such hours, people continually take in information, which must be either used immediately or stored until they can find a category for it so that it fits some pattern. Against this backdrop, one is compelled to ask: Could it be that Kgashane’s dreams were a mere train of hallucinatory experiences, albeit with some degree of (convenient) coherence, taking place because of the “new” information that he received through interactions with Lutheran Christians? Can his dreams be subjected to the Balobedu’s *Thugula complex* and make sense? This is worth considering because Zimmermann, citing Nell (2012) proclaims that:

Dreams were seen to either portray or predict real events, as was reflected in the stories of the lives of several Christian saints and martyrs who had predictive dreams. In

addition, it was believed that one could have meaningful encounters with God and His angels through dreams and that God spoke with mortals in dreams.

The motif of a dream as a cause to convert to Christianity within late nineteenth-century Protestant missions is central to the call to serve God. However, it was only acceptable as long as the dream was a message from God and not from African heathen ancestors. Kgashane's dreams are used to prod him into conversion, creating two worlds from which he should choose; a blissful world, or a space of eternal suffering. However, even if one were to insist on subjecting Kgashane's dreams to analysis through the biblical (Judeo-Christian) interpretative paradigm, it would still compel one to take it with a pinch of salt. Take, for example, the narrative components captured in Jacob's dream in Genesis (28:10–18). Firstly, Jacob was *alone* and *slept* in a *secluded* place. Secondly, Jacob had a dream of a ladder whose top reached heaven, and there the angels of God were ascending and descending on it. Thirdly, the God of Abraham and Isaac (Jacob's grandfather and father) introduced Jacob and promised to give him the land on which he slept.

There are certain aspects that one would need to consider when interpreting Kgashane's dreams from a biblical (Judeo-Christian) perspective. Kgashane's apologist might begin by drawing a parallel between both Jacob and Kgashane to lend credence to the narrative as "supernatural." The justification could be based firstly on the fact that both Jacob and Kgashane were on a journey of their own. Jacob was heading to his uncle's house in Padan Aram, fleeing from his brother Esau who sought to kill him, whereas Kgashane left his home and went to Port Elizabeth in search of a gun to defend his land. The apologist of Kgashane's narrative myth of conversion has to begin here because the narrative requires Kgashane to be: a) separated from his home/kinfolk so that their voices are unheard, ignored, or marginalised; b) isolated from other non-Christians in Port Elizabeth; and c) interacting with no one but Christians, even in dreams. It is unclear whether Kgashane dreamt whilst sleeping or in a "trance," but it is highly unlikely that he was awake for three days/nights. Kgashane had to "sleep" or "die" or at least disappear for three days/nights like Jesus (a metaphor for the abandonment of his faith in African culture and traditions) and emerge as a "new" person in need of cleansing (baptism) and a Bible (indoctrination). Jacob awoke from his sleep and regretted that he had been in "God's house" but did not know it. By being among Lutheran Christians, Kgashane was in the house of God and seemingly did not know it until he was told, repeatedly!

Secondly, Kgashane's dreams (except for one) are largely populated by mortals and not by "God" and "angels" (immortals) as was the case in Jacob's narrative. Of course, in rebuttal, Kgashane's apologist will need to turn to the idea that the appearance of the "priest" and the "congregation" in his dreams is yet another way through which the "supernatural" world engages the natural world. This is because, as stated earlier, the Christian "priest" and Christian "congregation" are deployed as the embodiment of the Christian Godhead. Thirdly, from a biblical perspective, the ladder in Jacob's dream is

symbolic of the connection between the natural and the supernatural (in the New Testament, Jesus is the ladder upon which angels ascend and descend; he connects heaven to earth). In Jacob's dream, the monotheistic God in Orthodox Judaism and Trinitarian God (in the Christian worldview) occupy and speak to humans from a position of absolute ultimacy and supremacy—he is at the top of the ladder and immortal beings (i.e., angels) do his bidding. Kgashane's narrative myth subtly incorporates this dimension (the revelation of "God") by witnessing angels in white, hovering in the sky overseeing the physical dimension. Situating the Kgashane narrative myth in the *Thugula* complex; Kgashane has to respond to the voice of the Great Great Ancestor who is the Creator of the universe without question. The ancestral voice as *taelo* is all-powerful, not to be challenged. As a result, Kgashane's narrative is constructed in a manner that the main character is destined to comply with the teachings of the ancestors.

Limitations

Future studies on Kgashane should explore the narrative of conversion as an instrument to expand missionary work in the Bolobedu country and beyond. Because Kgashane is considered the first convert and martyr in Bolobedu, research should be conducted to examine how he was constructed as a martyr and how that influenced the nature of missionary work in the Northern Transvaal. It will be interesting to connect the dots between the Manche Masemola martyrdom, which happened 50 years after Kgashane. Further to this, there is a question lurking: Was Kgashane a Christian martyr or a Lobedu traitor? Someone has to respond to this and decide whether Kgashane was a traitor in the eyes of his people, or a Christian martyr sowing the seeds of Christianity in Bolobedu country and outside.

Recommendations

We would like to recommend that further studies of dreams should be explored beyond psychoanalysis to encourage a cross-cultural interpretation, especially in our world with so many intersecting beliefs, as a result of the syncretism of our societies.

Conclusion

In this article, we explored how Kgashane's narrative of conversion was constructed using dreams as a medium of agency. The dreams were found to be polyphonic, representing a multiplicity of voices. These voices, embedded in the dreams, begin with Kgashane's friends' efforts to persuade him to be converted, the songs and hymns that were regularly rehearsed before him, and what he had heard from church; ranging from hymns to a sermon. These presentations ultimately drift into the subconscious, finding expression later as dreams. The dreams have surely been proven to be mirrors of earlier conversations and visualisations. Furthermore, the dreams were found to be parabolic and salvific to the extent that they project the underlying cause for Kgashane's conversion. Makwala (1958) presents Kgashane's dreams as inspiration, insight, and revelation.

One of the major findings of this article is that there is a strong link between the conscious and the unconscious and that the content of the unconscious is often replayed and doubly voiced through a dream. The content of Kgashane's dreams constitutes a reflection of what was fed to him, leading us to believe that a dream sometimes is a reliving of the unconscious, the unconscious slipping out, and an act of the unconscious betraying the conscious. In addition, it can be argued that the dreams were deliberately crafted to construct a narrative to serve as a vanguard for the Lutheran Church. In this narrative, Kgashane's conversion is constructed as a product of divine revelation; finally, a story of a born martyr whose vision to spread the word of God is short-lived because the Balobedu rejected Christianity.

The story of Kgashane's second wife returning to the Medingen Mission following a dream has not been covered in this analysis because of the limitations of space. This is another matter for further exploration to determine how the Lutheran Church at the time managed to compromise its doctrines, which had no regard for the dreams of Africans. This propensity is not unusual, as was proven in a study on Manche Masemola, where Mokgoatšana (2021) demonstrated that despite Manche violating the Anglican Church's prohibition on initiation schools, and despite her refusal to be baptised in Western clothing, the church continued to consecrate her as a martyr and saint without baptism.

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