



# “Nibeze kodwa ningabalaleli” – An Analysis of Hidden Treasures in African Literature

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## ABSTRACT

This study critically explored African literature, focusing on the creative strategies 19th-century authors employed to resist censorship of African literary expression. The paper addresses the prevalent criticisms of African literature by examining Nyembezi’s novel “Inkinsela YaseMgungundlovu,” translated as “The Richman of Pietermaritzburg,” by Sandile Ngidi. The research highlighted the pivotal role of annotations in uncovering implicit societal constructs shaped by historical limitations within South African literature. Through a qualitative desktop study, this paper systematically analysed selected passages from the novel, employing monolingual and bilingual dictionaries along with scholarly literature to extract deeper meanings. The findings underscored how annotations bridge linguistic and cultural gaps, enriching readers’ understanding of the socio-political contexts embedded in the text. Additionally, the study advocates for the re-evaluation of African ethnic literature and encourages greater engagement among scholars and readers. It further posits that annotations enhance translation by providing crucial contextual information, empowering target readers to engage with the text as intended by its original audience. Ultimately, this research illuminates the hidden treasures within African literature, promoting its broader significance in literary studies and advocating for future analyses that reveal the rich cultural heritage of its people.

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## INTRODUCTION

This study critically examines African literature through the lens of 19th-century authors’ creative strategies employed to counteract censorship in African literary expression, drawing insights from the authoritative perspective of His Majesty King Misuzulu kaZwelithini who emphasised the importance of not merely accepting statements at face value but instead advocating for a thorough analysis of their contextual underpinnings.<sup>1</sup> African literature has been said to be disinteresting and lacked depth<sup>2</sup> and this paper contrasts the latter explaining the role of annotations in revealing knowledge that is embedded in this literature. Focusing on Nyembezi’s novel “Inkinsela YaseMgungundlovu,” translated as “The Rich Man of Pietermaritzburg,” the paper explores the role of annotations as pivotal mechanisms for uncovering

<sup>1</sup> Njabulo S Khoza, “Nibeze kodwa ningabalaleli. King Misuzulu. TikTok video. 2022. Accessed 00.34. August 23, 2022. <https://www.tiktok.com/@njabulosfisokhoza/video/7135191820924980486>

<sup>2</sup> Kelsey E Figone, “The Hegemony of English in South African Education,” 2012.

societal constructs that remain implicit due to the historical limitations imposed on South African literature. By bridging linguistic and cultural gaps, annotations not only elucidate nuanced meanings but also enrich readers' comprehension of the socio-political contexts underlying the text.

The primary objective of this research is to assert the significance of annotations in revealing omitted meanings in translations, highlighting the capability of African languages to articulate socio-political issues that are often left unspoken. Additionally, this study aims to advocate for the re-evaluation of African ethnic literature, fostering greater engagement among African scholars and readers in critical literary discourse.

To achieve these objectives, a qualitative desktop study will be undertaken, which involves a systematic analysis of selected passages from "Inkinsela YaseMgungundlovu" for potential annotation during the translation process. The text will undergo multiple readings to identify deeper meanings, utilising both monolingual and bilingual dictionaries, alongside relevant scholarly literature to facilitate a comprehensive understanding. The translated excerpts will be examined within the framework proposed by Verkhovtsova, which considers linguistic, cultural, and societal dimensions of cultural translation.<sup>3</sup>

This methodological approach underscores the essential function of translators as cultural mediators who navigate the complexities of fidelity while preserving the inherent cultural relevance of texts. Through an exploration of the intersections between annotation, culture, and translation, this research calls for scholars and translators to acknowledge and address the discrepancies that emerge between original linguistic frameworks and their adaptations in different cultural contexts. Ultimately, the findings of this study aim to illuminate the hidden treasures inherent in African literature, advocating for its broader significance within literary studies and articulating the critical role of annotations in enhancing the translation of this rich and diverse literary tradition.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review focuses on African ethnic literature, the translation of the novel of *Inkinsela YaseMgungundlovu* to *The Richman of Pietermaritzburg* and Annotations in translation.

### African Ethnic Literature

Scholars have different views of what African literature is. Nkosi labelled this literature as "The bastard child of many cultures and genres, the accumulator of many styles and traditions, the modern African novel, it is said, cannot properly reflect African reality,"<sup>4</sup> while Europeans and Americans categorise literature written from an African perspective in French, English, and Portuguese as African literature. Achebe says the definition of African literature should consider the continent, its people, and all that surrounds it,<sup>5</sup> which is aligned with Altijani and Omer's explanation of this literature as literary work from West Africa, East Africa, and Southern Africa.<sup>6</sup>

Achebe further explains African literature as creative writing that authentically incorporates an African setting, or where experiences rooted in Africa are integral, forming a crucial component of literature.<sup>7</sup> This literature is characterised by its scope, encompassing the entire nation with a real or potential audience spread across the entire territory. Essentially, it is literature penned in the national language. In contrast, ethnic literature (from any country) pertains to works accessible solely to a specific ethnic group within the nation. African ethnic literature is a component of African literature written for people speaking a particular language within a nation. This paper studies African ethnic literature through a novel, *Inkinsela YaseMgungundlovu* by Nyembezi, discussing South African history written in an African language.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Olga Verkhovtsova, "Cultural Equivalence in Translation." *Sworld-Us Conference proceedings*, no. usc21-01 (November 30, 2023): 129–31. <https://doi.org/10.30888/2709-2267.2023-21-01-009>.

<sup>4</sup> L. Nkosi, *Tasks and Masks: Themes and Styles of African Literature* (Longman Group United Kingdom, 1981).53.

<sup>5</sup> Chinua Achebe, "The African Writer and the English Language," in *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory* (Routledge, 2015), 428–34.

<sup>6</sup> Ashraf Ahmed Omer Altijani, and Mahmoud Ali Ahmed Omer, "Major themes of sociopolitical post-colonial African literature." *International Journal of Contemporary Applied Researches*, 6(7), (2019): 160-73.

<sup>7</sup> Achebe, "The African Writer and the English Language."

<sup>8</sup> C.L.S. Nyembezi, *Scholar's Zulu Dictionary; English-Zulu, Zulu-English*, 4th ed. (Shuter and Shooter, 2009).

The book can be categorised as African ethnic literature as it is written in isiZulu, a language understood by a majority of the South African population but not the entire nation due to active multilingualism in the country. African literature aims to appeal to both African and international readers, and during the period of censorship in South Africa from the 1960s to the 1980s, authors writing African ethnic literature carefully crafted their stories to hide their advocacy against apartheid. It is important to mention that it was not only African ethnic literature that was censored but also Afrikaans and English literature that was not aligned with government policies and some of those authors (White authors) were arrested for their works. Unfortunately, especially in literature written in African languages, this was misinterpreted as simplistic literature. African ethnic literature has been seen as unable to address issues concerning Black people due to censorship during the apartheid era.<sup>9</sup>

The belittling of African ethnic literature can be attributed to various reasons, from the country's political history to the lack of interest among publishers in producing books for African languages. In 1978, Ntuli noted that isiZulu literature had not progressed as expected due to publishers being hesitant to release mature content for fear of financial loss. These limitations in African ethnic literature in South Africa stem from past government censorship and regulations, which focused on preserving a White, predominantly Afrikaans national identity. Methods such as book banning, author blacklisting, state-imposed repression, and self-censorship were employed to eliminate the concept of a non-racial South Africa.

African ethnic literature has faced negative criticism due to assumptions and lack of objective research. Nkosi calls for a reconsideration of perspectives associated with this literature in the light of increased freedom of expression and tackling contemporary issues in isiZulu literature.<sup>10</sup> According to Fredericks and Mvunelo, the colonialisation of literature and the dominance of English and Afrikaans in South African publishing have resulted in a publishing industry regulated by White individuals.<sup>11</sup> Scholars such as Nyembezi used their creativity to express their realities and identify problems and injustices faced by Black people. The impact of their work, including popular titles like *Inkinsela YaseMgungundlovu*, highlights the struggle to address issues relevant to the African context.

### ***The Richman of Pietermaritzburg***

The study analysed Ngidi's account of the translation process, which was shared in an online newspaper, Mail & Guardian, in January 2019. The translator acknowledged the challenges he faced during the translation of the book. He reflected on the difficulties he encountered and recognised the risk of presenting anthropological accounts of African lives through translation. This paper aims to explore these themes further through annotations.

The translator identified societal issues portrayed in the book and suggested that the author did not directly address the immorality of apartheid. Instead, the author assigned roles to the characters to convey the story clearly to the reader. This approach is evident in the opening lines of the book.

“Nyanyadu in northern Natal is an old place, a pretty famous place, in fact. The name of the place is taken from that of the nearby Nyanyadu mountain. If you are travelling to this place, either from Durban in the south or Johannesburg in the north, the best route to take is the one that goes straight to the town of Dundee. In this town you would board the bus to Nyanyadu that travels once a day, except on Sundays. The bus leaves Dundee at lunchtime, and zigzags through the White suburbs until it exits the town. Then you will see it blowing up the winds beside the legendary Mpathe mountain, which is believed to harbour money left by ghosts at its summit. It will keep on travelling, stopping only to let some passengers alight. Some would have come to Dundee by the buses from Zululand, others would have come by the buses from Msinga.”

<sup>9</sup> Mazisi Kunene, “Some Aspects of South African Literature,” *World Literature Today* 70, no. 1 (1996): 13–16.

<sup>10</sup> Nkosi, *Tasks and Masks: Themes and Styles of African Literature*.

<sup>11</sup> George H. Fredericks, and Zolile Mvunelo. “Publication of books in indigenous South African languages and their availability and use in public libraries.” *South African Journal of Libraries and Information Science* 69.2 (2003): 133-139.

The translator remained faithful to the source text and translated the entire meaning without adding any extra information to help a reader from a different culture understand the reality of apartheid for Black people as simply explained in the original text. However, it is worth noting that he mentions that there were additions in the translation such as in “nembala isithombe sasuka kulona sadlulela kulo [the photograph moved from one hand to another like an object of communal wonder] later in his translation. The words ‘like an object of communal wonder’ are an addition providing clarity to the sentence. As expected of a good translator, Ngidi according to words in the article – “did not try to simplify or romanticise the text. Beneath the rural setting lies a world deeply affected by land dispossession and forced labour in the mines.” He recognised the context from the perspective of the original culture, but it’s not guaranteed that the target reader will have the same understanding. This paper argues that linguistic faithfulness without cross-cultural communication, in translation, can hinder the full transfer of information between cultures and suggests including annotations to aid in cultural translation.

In line with the annotation concept explored in the paper, it was interesting to note that the translator inserted comments in the translation to bridge language gaps. For example, there were margin notes in the text, particularly regarding exclamations. In addition to these, he provided a glossary at the end of the book. The translator’s expertise in cultural translation is evident, although he chose not to delve deeply into the concepts embedded in the original text. This paper sees the translator’s role as not only conveying meaning but also preserving the cultural essence of the text to fully capture the author’s intention. The translator remained neutral and saw himself as a “glorified salesman” presenting African cultures to Europe and North America, while still staying true to the essence of the original text as a living literature. This balancing act presents the challenge of achieving cultural equivalence in translation while remaining faithful to the source text – a dilemma that translators face regularly, especially in literary translation.

### Annotation in Translation

Verkhovtsova defines cultural translation as the act of translating in order to preserve the original text’s cultural, social, and contextual elements, ensuring that the message remains authentic and culturally appropriate.<sup>12</sup> The goal is to achieve crucial cultural equivalence for effective communication while maintaining both linguistic precision and cultural relevance. This is the expectation of most clients when issuing a translation brief, in accordance with Nord’s definition of the translation process, which states that the translation should convey the intended meaning of the source text while also fitting within the context of the target reader’s environment.<sup>13</sup>

The role of a translator is to convey meaning across languages and cultures as intended by the author of the source text.<sup>14</sup> When literal word equivalents are insufficient to convey this message, annotations can be helpful. Evelyn and Rini refer to Koskinen when explaining the use of annotations in translation.<sup>15</sup> They state that annotated translations consist of notes and observations made by translators while translating, primarily focusing on challenging passages or, depending on the approach taken, those that contain noteworthy features relevant to the theme of the translation. Subsequently, these notes become a long list which can be analysed through theoretical and practical means relevant to that translation project in the timeline of the original text.

Therefore, annotation in translation is the process of meticulously recording notes and observations throughout the translation process. These annotations focus on particularly challenging segments or those with distinctive characteristics relevant to the project’s subject matter. This process aims to provide clarity to the target reader by highlighting parts of the text that may not convey the intended meaning of the source text or that may be easily interpreted at face value rather than the depth understood by readers of the source text. As a result, in teaching translation studies, students are encouraged to annotate their translations, explaining the decisions they had to make and the challenges they faced when translating texts.<sup>16</sup> Anthony Pym suggests that when translators engage in the act of translation, they not only

<sup>12</sup> Verkhovtsova, “Cultural Equivalence in Translation.”

<sup>13</sup> Christiane Nord, “Scopos, Loyalty, and Translational Conventions,” *Target. International Journal of Translation Studies* 3, no. 1 (1991): 91–109.

<sup>14</sup> P. Newmark, *A Textbook of Translation* (Hemel Hempstead: Prentice Hall International Ltd., 1988).

<sup>15</sup> Marcella Evelyn and Julia Eka Rini, “An Annotated Translation of a Book Entitled Experiencing God in The Ordinary,” *Kata Kita: Journal of Language, Literature, and Teaching* 10, no. 2 (2022): 342.

<sup>16</sup> Eka Ardhinie, “An Annotated Translation of Daughter,” *Journal of Language and Literature* 5, no. 1 (2017).

transform texts and introduce new ideas but also participate in deep cognitive processes that demonstrate their unique perspectives and high levels of creativity.<sup>17</sup> This is evident in the intralingual translation of *Macbeth* in 2005 by Raffel, who annotated the text and explained his work as follows:

My annotation practices have followed the same principles used in *The Annotated Milton*, published in 1999, and in my annotated editions of *Hamlet*, published (as the initial volume in this series) in 2003, and *Romeo and Juliet* (published in 2004). Classroom experience has validated these editions. Classes of mixed upper-level undergraduates and graduate students have more quickly and thoroughly transcended language barriers than ever before. This allows the teacher, or a general reader without a teacher, to move more promptly and confidently to the non-linguistic matters that have made Shakespeare and Milton great and important poets.<sup>18</sup>

The annotation of *Macbeth* is beneficial for teachers and students in understanding the message conveyed by the author. It is interesting that Raffel was discussing annotating within the same language and culture of the readers. Annotations become even more necessary when translating texts between different cultures. This paper suggests including annotations in the translation of historical works due to censorship during that time period and its impact on the authors. When translating texts from different time periods, translators sometimes interpret the text based on their own understanding rather than providing clarification. BeDuhn distinguishes between interpretation, which can limit the meaning in a biased way, and clarification, which expands the potential meaning of a word or phrase.<sup>19</sup> Annotations offer clarity to the story by highlighting culturally relevant elements and important details that should be included, allowing the reader to better understand the source text's culture.

African ethnic literature may also benefit from annotations in translation to clarify content and prevent misinterpretations that may devalue the work. The lack of contextual and cultural background can hinder information transfer between cultures. The late Mazisi Kunene emphasises the importance of thoroughly analysing African ethnic literature to uncover the true story that the authors intended to convey:

*“Kawubheke nje nayo Inkinsela YaseMgungundlovu kaNyembezi, kawubheke neziningi izincwadi ezindala ezazibhalwa kanje, nanamuhla azikakakhohlakali ziyanamibhitheka. ... Kuphela ingxaki ukuba sisho ukuthi zikhuluma ngani? Ziqondeni olungumbono ojulile? ... Esikufunayo thina wukuthi zithini? Kubani? Ngani? Nganhlalo yini? Zinandisa kanjani ngolimi ukuze zikhumbuleke? Konke lokhu yikhona kusithunukayo thina.”*<sup>20</sup>

[If you consider *Inkinsela YaseMgungundlovu* by Nyembezi and think about other classic books that have been written in a similar fashion; we still remember them because they captivated the reader... The only issue is that we may have failed to clearly convey their themes... What messages are embedded within them? What are they trying to convey? To whom are they speaking and about what or with what intentions? Which society are they addressing? How can we use language to make them more engaging and memorable? These are the questions that challenge us.]

The lack of literary analysis and clarification of the essence of literature results in an incomplete message about African ethnic literature. The cultural connotations of expressions woven into the texts should be unpacked, especially when these texts are translated, to avoid the continual rejection of African knowledge systems. This rejection was a politically influenced means of erasing the contributions of Africans to history and knowledge production in African languages.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Anthony Pym, “The Translator as Non-Author, and I Am Sorry about That,” *The Translator as Author: Perspectives on Literary Translation*, 2011, 31–43.

<sup>18</sup> B. Raffel, *Macbeth: Fully Annotated, with an Introduction by Burton Raffel (The Annotated Shakespeare)* (Yale University Press, 2005).

<sup>19</sup> Jason BeDuhn, *Truth in Translation: Accuracy and Bias in English Translations of the New Testament* (University Press of America, 2003).

<sup>20</sup> Mazisi Kunene, *Amalokotho Kanomkhubulwane* (Kzn Books, 1996).4.

<sup>21</sup> Nobuhle Ndimande-Hlongwa and Leonce Rushubirwa, “Gender Inequality and Language Reflections in African Indigenous Languages: Comparative Cases from IsiZulu and Kiswahili,” *Alternation* 13 (2014): 394.

Coogan et al. published *The New Oxford Annotated Bible* as editors. On the website where this Bible can be downloaded, the Bible is reported to be “the best way to study and understand the Bible at home or in the classroom.”<sup>22</sup> This thoroughly revised and substantially updated edition contains the best scholarship informed by recent discoveries and anchored in the solid Study Bible tradition.” See the following excerpt from Genesis 2:10-18:

<p>the LORD and invoked the name of the LORD.  <sup>9</sup> And Abram journeyed on by stages toward the Negeb.  <sup>10</sup> Now there was a famine in the land. So Abram went down to Egypt to reside there as an alien, for the famine was severe in the land.  <sup>11</sup> When he was about to enter Egypt, he said to his wife Sarai, “I know well that you are a woman beautiful in appearance; <sup>12</sup> and when the Egyptians see you, they will say, ‘This is his wife’; then they will kill me, but they will let you live. <sup>13</sup> Say you are my sister, so that it may go well with me because of you, and that my life may be spared on your account.”  <sup>14</sup> When Abram entered Egypt the Egyptians saw that the woman was very beautiful.  <sup>15</sup> When the officials of Pharaoh saw her, they praised her to Pharaoh. And the woman was taken into Pharaoh’s house. <sup>16</sup> And for her sake he dealt well with Abram; and he had sheep, oxen, male donkeys, male and female slaves, female donkeys, and camels.  <sup>17</sup> But the LORD afflicted Pharaoh and his house with great plagues because of Sarai, Abram’s wife. <sup>18</sup> So Pharaoh called Abram, and said, “What is this you have done to me? Why did you not tell me that she was your wife?”  <sup>19</sup> Why did you say, ‘She is my sister,’ so that I took her for my wife? Now then, here is your</p>	<p>called on the name of the LORD. <sup>5</sup> Now Lot, who went with Abram, also had flocks and herds and tents, <sup>6</sup> so that the land could not support both of them living together; for their possessions were so great that they could not live together, <sup>7</sup> and there was strife between the herders of Abram’s livestock and the herders of Lot’s livestock. At that time the Canaanites and the Perizzites lived in the land.  <sup>8</sup> Then Abram said to Lot, “Let there be no strife between you and me, and between your herders and my herders; for we are kindred. <sup>9</sup> Is not the whole land before you? Separate yourself from me. If you take the left hand, then I will go to the right; or if you take the right hand, then I will go to the left.” <sup>10</sup> Lot looked about him, and saw that the plain of the Jordan was well watered everywhere like the garden of the LORD, like the land of Egypt, in the direction of Zoar; this was before the LORD had destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah.  <sup>11</sup> So Lot chose for himself all the plain of the Jordan, and Lot journeyed eastward; thus they separated from each other. <sup>12</sup> Abram settled in the land of Canaan, while Lot settled among the cities of the Plain and moved his</p>
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12.10–13.1: First story of endangerment of the matriarch (cf. ch 20; 26.6–11). Putting Sarah in jeopardy to protect himself, Abraham appears not to trust the promise of protection just offered him. On Abraham’s later claim to be Sarah’s half-brother, see 20.12n. Overall, this story of descent into Egypt because of famine and rescue through plagues anticipates many aspects of the later narrative about Israel’s descent into Egypt and Exodus from it (Gen 45–Ex 14).

13.2–18: Split of Abraham and Lot. 2–7: This narrative describing huge flocks and riches in Abraham’s household testifies to the preliminary fulfillment of the promises of blessing in 12.2–3. Lot, see 11.27,31. 8–13: The narrative anticipates the Sodom and Gomorrah narrative (ch 19) through mention of those cities, the wickedness of their inhabitants (13.13), and references to Zoar (19.19–23). It also notes that Lot, the heir apparent, does

<sup>a</sup> Or terebinth  
<sup>b</sup> Heb seed

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Figure 1: Annotation from Genesis 2:10-18 from *The New Oxford Annotated Bible*

This Bible annotates the translation of the text from the point of view of experts, which demonstrates the need for research and thorough analysis of content prior to providing explanations. *Figure 1* shows how the translators translated the verses in-text and explained the verses in the annotations. This way, the reader not only receives the translation but also the contextual meaning through an explanation of the intended meaning when the text was written in the Hebrew Bible now translated into English.

Cultural equivalence is crucial when translating literature as it provides the reader with a product of literary analysis, cultural consideration (of both the source and target audience), and linguistic skills that accurately convey the intended meaning of the author. According to Verkhovtsova, cultural equivalence in translation ensures a message is accurately conveyed across cultures, bridging cultural gaps and enabling meaningful cross-cultural communication.<sup>23</sup>

Challenges related to cultural equivalence can be addressed through careful selection of equivalences and substitutes when no direct cultural equivalence exists.<sup>24</sup> Translators should go beyond the linguistic transfer of words across cultures and strive to convey meaning and provide a platform that allows readers to equally understand the authors of the source text. This can be achieved through annotating translation.

<sup>22</sup> Michael David Coogan et al., *The New Oxford Annotated Apocrypha: New Revised Standard Version* (Oxford University Press, 2018).

<sup>23</sup> Verkhovtsova, “Cultural Equivalence in Translation.”

<sup>24</sup> Mona Baker, *In Other Words: A Coursebook on Translation* (Routledge, 2018).

## METHODOLOGY

This is a qualitative desktop study. The paper collected sample texts to be considered for annotation during translation in the *Inkinsela YaseMngungundlovu*. The story was read many times, focusing on discourse to deduce more than the surface interpretation of the text. Monolingual and bilingual dictionaries and scholarly works were used to extract deeper meaning from the text. The selected sentences were translated from isiZulu to English. The analysis is structured according to elements of cultural translation discussed by Verkhovtsova, including linguistic, cultural, and societal considerations.<sup>25</sup>

## PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

This section begins with a summary of the novel and then proceeds to examine it based on four elements that are crucial in translation – linguistic considerations, cultural considerations, and societal considerations.

- **A Summary of *Inkinsela YaseMngungundlovu***

Ndebenkulu, an esquire from Pietermaritzburg, arrives at Nyanyadu, a rural village in Natal. Despite being a stranger, he resides at the Mkhwanazi homestead as a guest. He promises the community wealth in exchange for their cattle, which he intends to take to the city to sell to abattoirs. The community later discovers, through Themba, Mkhwanazi's son, that he is a conman who swindles people from other villages using a different name, Mlomo. The story draws from political challenges faced by Black people in the 1930s when they were not allowed to 'overstock' cattle and had to sell them as per government instructions. In the 1930's the Native Affairs Department conducted campaigns on overstocking, that included auctioning of cattle belonging to Black people. The character Ndebenkulu used his knowledge of the law and that of the people and attempted to swindle them off their cattle. As much as he presented himself as a tycoon from the city among less educated people from the rural areas, he failed.<sup>26</sup>

- **Linguistic Considerations**

The word *isikwaya* which stands out in the story is examined. The Mkhwanazi family received a letter in the mail from an unknown man who signed the letter with the title "Esq". MaNtuli, Mkhwanazi's wife who did not complete her schooling, discusses the title with her husband:

*Nakhu nawe yise kaThemba uyasho ukuthi izikwaya ngabelungu abakhulu. Okusobala ukuthi nomuntu omnyama usuka emkhulu uma kuthiwa uyisikwaya. Mhlawumbe njengoba eyisikwaya nje ungumuntu othanda nokukhuluma isilungu. Pho uyobe ekwitiza nobani lapha? Hhayi yise kaThemba musa ukudlala ngami.*

[Themba's father, you have also mentioned that esquires are White people of a high stature. This implies that a Black person who is an esquire must be someone of high standing. Maybe he even prefers to speak English. But who will he speak it with here? No way, Themba's father, you must be joking.]

*Isikwaya* is a transliteration of 'esquire' which is defined by the online Webster's 1828 dictionary as follows:

**ESQUIRE, noun** [Latin scutum, a shield; Gr. a hide, of which shields were anciently made.], a shield-bearer or armor-bearer, scutifer; an attendant on a knight. Hence in modern times, a title of dignity next in degree below a knight. In England, this title is given to the younger sons of noblemen, to officers of the king's courts and of the household, to counselors at law, justices of the peace, while in commission, sheriffs, and other gentlemen. In the United States, the title is given to public officers of all degrees, from governors down to justices and attorneys. Indeed the title, in addressing letters, is bestowed on any person at pleasure and contains no definite description. It is merely an expression of respect.

<sup>25</sup> Verkhovtsova, "Cultural Equivalence in Translation."

<sup>26</sup> Isaac Dumsani Ntuli, "Zulu Literature in the Global Book Market: The English Translation of *Inkinsela YaseMngungundlovu*" (2015).

Drawing from this definition and the story, Ndebenkulu is an esquire from the city of Pietermaritzburg, which was ruled by White people. Mkhawanazi had heard of esquires, but they were always White people. Surprisingly, Ndebenkulu was a Black esquire, which surprised the Mkhwanazi family, as already quoted. Ndebenkulu's personality and the knowledge plus connections he claimed to have, led the people to give him the respect offered to White people. Ultimately, he is seen as a White person with Black skin.

Maphumulo, regarding the usage of *isikwaya* in the title of the book, stated the following:

*Enye yezincwadi zikaNyembezi enedumela ethi, Inkinsela YaseMgungundlovu, ingenye yezincwadi esedlula kuleli bhodi. Yona yafika nesihloko esithi, Isikwaya SaseMgungundlovu. Ibhodi layithanda le ncwadi. Kodwa amanye amalungu aphawula ukuthi sasingekho isizathu sokuba kusetshenziswe igama lesilungu elithi, **Isikwaya** likhona elesiZulu elalithi, **Inkinsela**. Kwanconywa lokho kuSlz. Nyembezi. Wehlela ngezansi, wavuma.<sup>27</sup>*

[One of Nyembezi's famous novels, *Inkinsela YaseMgungundlovu*, is one of the books being reviewed by this Board. It was submitted under the title *Isikwaya SaseMgungundlovu*. The Board enjoyed the book. However, some members expressed that there was no need to use the English transliteration of Esquire to *Isikwaya* when an isiZulu term *Inkinsela* was available. This suggestion was made to Prof Nyembezi, who agreed.]

Arguments against the use of transliteration, when equivalents exist, align with the views of Alberts asserts that transliteration should be used as a last resort.<sup>28</sup> The paper also notes that although Nyembezi agreed with the Board's sentiments, he only changed the title but retained the transliteration in the story. Given the usage of 'inkinsela' in the title, the translation rendered was the 'richman' which omitted the status of an esquire of being honourable and of a much higher societal ranking. MaNtuli's understanding of 'isikwaya' extended beyond his wealth to social behaviours that were different from theirs. She expected him to speak English, a language unbeknown to them. Clearly, an esquire is not only wealthy but is more of a nobleman who could be associated with White people, who were deemed superior to Black people. The translation of 'esquire' to 'inkinsela' in the title and the transliteration of the same as 'isikwaya' in the story highlights the significance of achieving equivalence in translation while maintaining the author's intention is discussed.

### • Cultural Considerations

In their search for the formal definition of culture, Birukou *et al.* refer to Harris' explanation of culture which are lived experiences and practices of a group that incorporates habitual patterns of thought, emotion, and behaviour that define and distinguish the members of a specific society or community.<sup>29</sup> In this paper, the cultural considerations of interest are the daily lives of Black people relayed in 2 samples.

### Sample 1: The land

*Indlela elula yokufinyelela eNyanyadu wukuba uqonde edolobheni laseDundee lapho uzothola khona ibhasi. Linye ibhasi laseNyanyadu. ...Lisuka eDundee ngezikhathi zamadina, lithubeleze njalo edolobheni ledlule imizi yabelungu ngapha nangapha komgwaqo lize liye liyophumela phandle komuzi. Yilo leliya lisusa uthuli lubheka phezulu liyogudla ngaphansi kwentaba iMpathe okuthiwa inemali yezipoki.*

[The easiest way to reach Nyanyadu is to go to Dundee, where you will catch a bus. There is only one bus heading to Nyanyadu. ... It leaves Dundee around lunchtime and travels past White people's houses on either side of the road until it leaves that residential area. It travels past a mountain called Mpathe which is believed to have money that belongs to ghosts.]

<sup>27</sup> Abednego Mandla Maphumulo., ed. *Ukuvamisa imithetho yokubhala nobhalomagama lwesiZulu lonyaka wezi-2021*. University of KwaZulu-Natal Press.2021

<sup>28</sup> M. Alberts, "Terminology in South Africa." *Lexikos*, 9 (1999): 18-35.

<sup>29</sup> Aliaksandr Birukou et al., "A Formal Definition of Culture," *Models for Intercultural Collaboration and Negotiation*, 2013, 5.



A target text reader who is not familiar with the cultural practices and laws of the people may not fully grasp why Mkhwanazi's family resided in the village, or appreciate the significance of the aesthetics described in the text. Therefore, it is suggested that this paragraph be accompanied by an annotation.

The 1913 Land Act separated residential areas based on race and cultural background. Black individuals were relegated to rural areas and townships, while White individuals resided in urban locations. Nyembezi effectively illustrates the impact of this Act by vividly describing the lengthy bus journey to town. The story is set in a rural area designated for Black individuals, highlighting the struggles they faced in traveling long distances to access urban areas. Black individuals were displaced from areas allocated to White individuals and left in impoverished mountainous regions. According to Modise and Mtshiselwa, South Africans were deprived of their land, leading to ongoing poverty among citizens. They noted that the social injustices that began in 1913 persist even in the post-apartheid era, with citizens still grappling with land disputes. An annotation could provide further context for this paragraph.<sup>30</sup>

## Sample 2: Transportation

*Linye ibhasi laseNyanyadu. Lihamba kanye ngosuku nsuku zonke ngaphandle kwelanga langeSonto....*

*Babekujwayele laba bantu ukuhamba phansi amabanga amade. Abakushayi mkhuba. Amakhosikazi ayithwala imithwalo emakhanda, amadoda ayetshathe emahlombe. Abanye-ke babehlangatshezwa ngamakalishi, bahambe kalula.*

[There is only one bus to Nyanyadu. It travels once a day daily save for Sundays....

These people were accustomed to walking long distances. They did not have a problem with it. Women carried packages on their heads; men carried them on their shoulders. Other people were fetched with carts and had a simpler trip.]

Nyembezi describes a rural village where a bus only made one trip to town and back each day, and no trips at all on Sundays. The rural life depicted is a reality stemming from the Act, and it is shown on the same page with farming citizens who walk long distances while carrying packages on their heads if they are women, or their shoulders if they are men. Those who are more well-off have horses or donkeys with carts that transport their groceries. The story continues to explain that residents received mail from the post office and that doctors were located very far away from where people lived.

The story was written in 1961, yet the rural lifestyle portrayed in the story is still true today. There are still people in rural areas who walk long distances carrying groceries on their heads, and accessing healthcare and other essential services for basic survival remains a challenge. According to Booysen, access to healthcare and service delivery is difficult in urban areas, but even more so in rural areas.<sup>31</sup> This challenge is emphasised in the story from the time it was set, and unfortunately, it continues to be a hurdle in the new millennium.

- **Societal Considerations**

Braveman explains that societal conditions refer to the environments in which individuals live and work.<sup>32</sup> These environments are heavily influenced by various critical factors such as economic status, job availability, and level of education, among other traits. When examining the societal conditions of individuals from Nyanyadu, this paper focuses on the Mkhwanazi family.

<sup>30</sup> Leepo Modise and Ndikho Mtshiselwa, "The Natives Land Act of 1913 Engineered the Poverty of Black South Africans: A Historico-Ecclesiastical Perspective," *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae* 39, no. 2 (2013): 359–78.

<sup>31</sup> Frikkie Booysen, "Urban–Rural Inequalities in Health Care Delivery in South Africa," *Development Southern Africa* 20, no. 5 (2003): 659–73.

<sup>32</sup> Paula Braveman, "Social Conditions, Health Equity, and Human Rights," *Health & Hum. Rts.* 12 (2010): 31.

Readers learn from the story that Mr Mkhwanazi and his wife went to school up to standard 4, which is now grade 6.

*Isikolo wafunda khona lapha eNyanyadu, kwathi ngoba ngalezo zinsuku kwakufundwa kugcinwe koStd. 4, naye wagcina lapho kwase useqedile. Noma wayegcine kuStd. 4 wayethathwa njengomuntu ofundile nophucukile. .... Naye wayengazibali engumuntu ofundile. Baze baqala ukwenyela oMkhwanazi lapho sekwanda abafunde emakhholiji.....Naye uMaNtuli wayengafundanga kuyaphi ngoba wathi lapho efika kuStd. 4 uMabhozomela wathi usefundile, uma intombazane ifunde kakhulu isuke indinde.*

[He received his education at Nyanyadu. At that time, students only went up to Std. 4, and he also completed his education at that level. Despite only attending up to Std. 4, he was viewed as an educated and modern person. He viewed himself as educated as well. The Mkhwanazis started to feel embarrassed as more people began attending college... Even MaNtuli was not considered highly educated as she also only completed Std. 4 MaBhozomela believed she was educated, warning that being too educated often ends up immoral.]

Van der Walt et al. conducted a study on the progress of South African education since the 1960s, when the book was written, and found that countries in Southern Africa have struggled to move away from the old educational systems put in place by past political leaders.<sup>33</sup> This information may be new to readers, so an annotation explaining how Bantu education influenced the social choices of characters in the novel would be helpful.

The Bantu Education system in South Africa was intended to keep Black people at a lower socio-economic status, while White people received a higher quality of education. Mr. Mkhwanazi took pride in his standard four education because, at that time, Black people were not expected to receive much education, as they were categorised as lower-class citizens under the Bantu Education Act of 1953.<sup>34</sup> Although Mkhwanazi and his wife only completed Standard 4, their son went on to college.

*Kwakukhona nelinye ibhungu elase lifunda ekholiji. Leli bhungu, uThemba Mkhwanazi, kwakuyizibulo likaMkhwanazi nowakwakhe uMaNtuli.*

[There was also a young man who was a college student. This young man was Themba Mkhwanazi, Mkhwanazi, and MaNtuli's firstborn.]

Despite not completing school themselves, Mkhwanazi's son attended college. The number of first-generation graduates in South Africa has been increasing, with students coming from poor backgrounds and lower socio-economic positions. This was the case with Themba, who, despite his parents' limited education, was considered educated in the family because he reached college. Highlighting the role of Themba's education in his community would explain why his family trusted him so dearly in the story and would help in realising why he plays an important role in suspecting that Ndebenkulu is a conman.

## DISCUSSION

The story of *Inkinsela YaseMgungundlovu* tells of people who almost lost their cattle due to the cunning Ndebenkulu tricks, as portrayed on the surface. However, a deeper examination of how authors used satire in their stories due to literary censorship<sup>35</sup> could reveal the intended meaning of stories when reviewed in consideration of societal issues and legislation of the time that stories are set. Explanation of concepts and angles used to tell the story can be included in translation through annotations. Ngidi, in his translation of

<sup>33</sup> Johannes L van der Walt, Ferdinand J Potgieter, and Charl C Wolhuter, "Education Reform in Southern Africa since the 1960s: What Progress Has Been Made?," *The Anthropologist* 17, no. 1 (2014): 279–90.

<sup>34</sup> Mark Hunter, "The Bond of Education: Gender, the Value of Children, and the Making of Umlazi Township in 1960s South Africa," *The Journal of African History* 55, no. 3 (2014): 467–90.

<sup>35</sup> Ntuli, "Zulu Literature in the Global Book Market: The English Translation of *Inkinsela YaseMgungundlovu*."

the story, chose not to uncover the hidden details, stating that a translator should remain neutral.<sup>36</sup> Translators have a duty to ensure that literature is translated in a manner that is not only faithful to the language, but it should ensure cross-cultural communication<sup>37</sup> and annotations are one of the resources that translators can use to bridge cultural gaps without compromising the sanctity of the text. It goes without saying that the achievement of cultural equivalence without compromising the neutrality of the translator should be considered. Leal discusses equivalence, fidelity and the translatability of texts considering the work of Steiner and Arrojo, saying,

For Steiner, our near obsession with the question of equivalence stems from the greater issue of translatability, which in turn “is rooted in ancient religious and psychological doubts on whether there ought to be any passage from one tongue to another.” Underpinning the question of (un)translatability is the issue of meaning: how meaning is produced and conveyed and whether it can be transferred from one language to another.<sup>38</sup>

The issue with the Board’s decision to advise Nyembezi to work with ‘inkinsela’ in the title revolves around translatability, equivalence, and fidelity. When considering Webster’s definition of ‘esquire’, missing features of status within society stand out in the equivalent given. As a result of Nyembezi’s purposeful use of *isikwaya*, the text ends with two non-contradictory terms referring to one character. The intention of the source text author, although not always clear, should always be considered in translation.<sup>39</sup> This cannot be overemphasised when referencing texts written during periods such as that of censorship; the intention of the author should be considered. Choosing an incomplete equivalent can sometimes be limiting, and therefore an annotation can be used to clarify the original intention of the author. A suggested annotation for the first usage of the word ‘esquire’ in the English translation would explain that Black people were not in positions of authority at that time; their role was merely to serve the White masters.<sup>40</sup>

A person unfamiliar with South African history would reconsider their understanding as they come across annotations text. They would be in a similar position to readers of the source text, understanding why Ndebenkulu is received with great honour by the villagers of Nyanyadu. Williams and Chesterman identify annotations as a tool for recording points of clarification, especially when cultural concepts are involved, to achieve cultural equivalence.<sup>41</sup> Cultural equivalence is a critical concept that addresses the challenge of accurately conveying the cultural nuances, context, and meanings of a source text into a target language without losing or distorting the original cultural elements.<sup>42</sup> The translator should contextualise the translation for new readers, often from different cultural backgrounds and worldviews, which can be done through annotations.

In the translation of African ethnic literature sometimes satirically conveyed through humour and sorrow, depicting the repercussions of historic apartheid legislations, annotation can be used to explain the story. Hidden treasures engraved in African ethnic literature, such as themes of land demarcation, societal challenges and linguistic choices of authors as found in *Inkinsela YaseMgungundlovu* should be revealed through annotations to achieve cultural equivalence.

Ndebenkulu’s arrival in Nyanyadu village with malicious intentions of stealing from the community showcases how easily people can be misled by someone of higher status. Themes identified in the data that are not relayed to target language readers are not that different from stories such as that of Nonqawuse from the Eastern Cape, where people were urged to destroy their crops and cattle based on a prophecy in 1856, resulting in poverty.<sup>43</sup> Black communities in Southern Africa have faced wealth losses due to superstitions, theft, and diseases, such as the Basotho people’s significant cattle loss between 1896 and

<sup>36</sup> Translating Nyembezi no walk in the park. Mail and Guardian Newspaper. 11 January 2019. Online. Available at: <https://mg.co.za/article/2019-01-11-00-translating-nyembezi-no-walk-in-the-park/> [Accessed: 2024 June 2024].

<sup>37</sup> Verkhovtsova, “Cultural Equivalence in Translation.”

<sup>38</sup> Alice Leal, *English and Translation in the European Union: Unity and Multiplicity in the Wake of Brexit* (Taylor & Francis, 2021).100-101.

<sup>39</sup> Christiane Nord, “Skopos and (Un) Certainty: How Functional Translators Deal with Doubt,” *Meta* 61, no. 1 (2016): 29–41.

<sup>40</sup> William Beinart and Saul Dubow, *Segregation and Apartheid in Twentieth-Century South Africa* (Psychology Press, 1995).

<sup>41</sup> Jenny Williams and Andrew Chesterman, *The Map: A Beginner’s Guide to Doing Research in Translation Studies* (Routledge, 2014).

<sup>42</sup> Verkhovtsova, “Cultural Equivalence in Translation.”

<sup>43</sup> S.H.H. Oelofse et al., “The Pollution and Destruction Threat of Gold Mining Waste on the Witwatersrand: A West Rand Case Study,” in *10th International Symposium on Environmental Issues and Waste Management in Energy and Mineral Production (SWEMP, 2007)*, Bangkok (Citeseer, 2007), 11–13.

1898, contributing to persistent poverty in rural areas of South Africa.<sup>44</sup> Such valuable information, documented during periods of advocacy in response to literary censorship, is concealed within African ethnic literature and should be shared with the world through annotated translations.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Annotations do not compromise a translator's neutrality; instead, they bring forth hidden information for the reader to comprehend the story on the same level as someone familiar with the cultural context. This paper suggests that texts translated from African languages to other languages should be annotated to explain translation difficulties and contribute to an understanding of cultural elements in the text. Doing so will give target text users an advantage in understanding the contextual information about the story, aiding them in comprehending the story in a way that is as close as possible to how the source text reader understood it. Furthermore, this paper advocates for an analysis of African ethnic literature in order to uncover hidden gems, allowing future generations to learn about the history of its people through literature.

## CONCLUSION

*Inkinsela YaseMgungundlovu* demonstrates the linguistic and intellectual prowess of isiZulu in conveying socio-political issues. Nkosi argues for a re-evaluation of the perception of African ethnic literature. Africans should actively engage in discussions about themselves and their literary works. As cautioned by King MisuZulu kaZwelithini, people listen attentively to understand what is being said and be able to defend their work against criticism rather than being influenced by negativity. There is a growing need for in-depth literary analysis of African ethnic literature to uncover meanings rooted in cultural experiences. Translators should maintain a neutral stance, not only translating the text verbatim within the target cultures acceptable boundaries but also providing annotations to help target readers understand nuances that may be obscured by cultural differences.

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<sup>44</sup> Pule Phoofolo, "Face to Face with Famine: The BaSotho and the Rinderpest, 1897-1899," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 29, no. 2 (2003): 503–27.

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