

History and the Problem of Dead Identity: Theorising the Revival of Zulu's Extinct Culture in Zakes Mda's *The Zulus of New York*

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Abstract

*This article attempts to explore history as a medium of reviving South African extinct identity in Zakes Mda's *The Zulus of New York*. The study theorises the impetus of rejuvenating such identity based on Mda's description of the Zulu's potential to perform their native socio-cultural traditions despite the colonial hegemony which limits their power to maintain their identity. It argues that this literary tendency is largely rooted in the peculiar theoretical discourse on South African subaltern and internally colonised identity vis-à-vis the West, namely the USA and Britain; a notion that tends to perpetuate Zulu's native and pre-colonial vernacular discourses. Within this narrative, the Zulu's nativism and the South African ethnicity are regarded as non-colonial powers since the indigenous tribes allegedly suffered under Western ruling nationalities in the annexed territories. Therefore, the study discovers the problematic implications of such an exclusive focus on the postcolonial perspective; and it questions the theoretical conception of subordination as an 'internal colony', which is decolonised by the Zulu. The study proposes arguments for the consideration of American and British domination as variant models of Western hegemony, and it emphasises the need for examining Zuluophone cultures when theorising Zulu postcolonial identity. It demonstrates how the Zulu minority may wage this metapolitical resistance using individual rights to challenge Western hegemony as an illiberal entity, and thus Zulu de-constitutes colonialism to restore indigenous demotic and territorial boundaries. Thus, indigenous Zulu people resist by seeking to constitutionally entrench their identity as the rightful 'subject of justice.*

Keywords: *Dead Identity, Post-colonialism, South Africa*

INTRODUCTION

The study of identity has offered challenging ethnic paths for critics and theorists since the advent of post-colonialism and its pertinent issues. The concept of identity is complex and encompasses multifarious views of the cultural as well as the social peculiarities of any nation due to the role of post-colonialism in bolstering a certain identity in favour of another one. One of the most groundbreaking topics of cultural identity, by its very normality, is the nature of humanity. The fact that humanity comprises discrepant ethnicities puts forth unprecedented consideration of identity as the basic premise of any minority or majority group. The necessity of tackling cultural identity yields in exploring the intertwined human races, which might be amalgamated in mutual understanding on the grounds of globalisation and a unified worldview. Identity, as a postcolonial concept, is highly accentuated for the sake of grasping literary narratives dealing with postcolonial phenomena as "identity emerges dialogically and represents a mix of political aspirations and commitments that are expressive of a ... postcolonial constitutions" (Fombad and Steytler, 2024, p.75). Accordingly, the human race is a vital pivotal point in studying the concept of cultural identity; and it reinforces critical analyses with genuine postcolonial transformations in both the imperial culture and its metropolitan and spatial variations.

The concept of cultural identity, moreover, interpolates several postcolonial issues in addition to the human race. In this regard, the colonial diaspora is one of the demanding ramifications of cultural identity. Diaspora formulates a construction bridge between the colonised national and the imperial cultural enterprise. Diaspora constitutes the latent intersection between the native socio-cultural residuals of the homeland and the new colonial culture which attempts to spread its ethnic domination of the colonised land. To put it another way, it is the authentic exploration of the cultural miscellany of two different cultures in a new identity formation; and "the exploration centers on the intricate interplay of identity and diaspora within the narrative, unraveling the profound impact of postcolonial legacies on the characters' journeys" (Auddya et al, 2024, p.55). Colonial

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domination, consequently, carries out the notion of colonial hegemony created by the imperial view of the colonised nation. Hence, colonial hegemony incarnates the sequential identity transformation into another one by virtue of the ethnic interaction between the imperial colonial culture and the native ethnicity affected by hegemony. Here, colonial hegemony is used by the imperial power to impose its presence on the native culture. However, it gives space for the native culture to thrive on forming its own social prosperity; or as Narayan Changder (2024) puts it simply: “hegemony allows the subordinate group to maintain its own social, cultural, ideological, or economic influence” (p.2). Yet, native identity becomes prone to extinction due to the massive colonial hegemony. The purpose of this study, therefore, is to explore history as a medium of reviving South African extinct identity, or dead identity, depicted in Zakes Mda’s *The Zulus of New York*. It will be an attempt to theorise the concept of “historical identity” by interpreting the authorial insights projected in the novel, which is hardly discussed in previous studies.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Post-colonialism addresses the issue of identity within the scope of diverse humanity studies. It perceives identity in the light of anthropology, psychoanalysis, ecocriticism, queer and gender studies and other interdisciplinary fields. In this sense, cultural identity becomes of paramount importance for perceiving a specific human ethnicity and its difference from other ethnicities. For this reason, scholars try their hands to provide a sufficient and appropriate conceptualisation of cultural identity and its patient relationship with post-colonialism. In *Postcolonial Lack: Identity, Culture, Surplus*, Gautam Basu Thakur (2020) discusses cultural identity in terms of psychoanalysis as a theoretical framework. He (2020) contends that cultural identity emanates from the persecuted peoples’ experience. To illustrate, the colonised minority is left with psychic complexes after the period of colonisation in their homeland. Therefore, the apparent impact of colonialism appears on their psychic demeanours since they suffered a lot under the persecutory practices of the colonisers. Thakur (2020), consequently, ascribes identity to the narratives of exclusion, othering and cultural appropriation. He (2020) describes the colonized minority as the marginalised other, and such marginalisation is an impasse for the oppressed people to formulate their neoliberal identity because they lack the social discourse to create a shift from pre-colonial to postcolonial identity. As such, Thakur (2020) conceptualises this shift as “politics of ontological discordance” (p.10); and he (2020) polarizes Lacanian psychoanalysis to explore the otherness of marginalized subjectivity and de-colonial theoretical critiques, such as those of Fanon, Bhabha and Spivak to formulate an interdisciplinary interrelationship between psychoanalysis and post-colonialism and their crucial role in identifying the nature of the oppressed otherness’s identity.

Dariusz Skórczewski and Agnieszka Polakowska (2020), in *Polish Literature and National Identity: A Postcolonial Landscape* approach postcolonial identity from a different perspective. They (2020) do not pursue identity in relation to psychoanalysis like Thakur’s argument explained in the previous paragraph. Instead, they (2020) scrutinise the individual and collective peculiarities of identity. They (2020) make a contrastive affinity between the collective and the individual cultural traits of identity. Identity is not a collective postcolonial phenomenon. It does not include all social classes within the same regional or national demarcations. It is simply individual i.e., it comprises the individual’s national sense of belonging to the homeland, which, simultaneously, exemplifies the comprehensive meaning of identity. “of interest here is rather collective identity, a social version of identity, which is co-experienced, co-mediated, and co-defined through intersubjective experiences” (p.41). Being so, Skórczewski and Polakowska (2020) prefer individual identity to collective identity because the former is the core conceptual nuance of identity discourse. Identity discourses, in this regard, are initiated by individuals who adhere to the sense of nationhood; and the individuals, who sincerely have a stout sense of belonging, embody the whole collective identity through relative discourse; and “identity discourse of a nation is thus a complex entity” (p.41).

Skórczewski and Polakowska (2020) draw a connection between individual identity and its reflection in literary narratives. Individual identity is intricate ethnic mosaics of diverse fields, such as journalism, literature, art and so forth. These fields meticulously incarnate the integral depiction of the entire nationhood and its multifarious aspects conveyed by identity discourse; Skórczewski and Polakowska (2020) argue that individual identity “is composed of a set of narratives that reflect and inform the process that formed and continue to shape a given nationhood and that are transmitted by means of various channels, from mass and popular culture

through literature, arts, journalism, and education to academic and non-academic critical discourses” (pp.41-42). Furthermore, they (2020) contend that individual identity opposes the colonial hegemonic discourses which “construct racial and cultural difference” (p.42). Being so, individual identity is a contradictory national trend; and it vehemently opposes colonial interferences in national affairs. Hence, national individuals utter their rejection of colonialism via their subjective responses to indict the foreign colonial effect on their national identity. Accordingly, the individuals’ ethnic discourse serves as a means of expressing their aversions to abnegating any form of colonial authority “viewed in the context of national discourse and national ideology” (p.44).

Identity and its postcolonial characteristics are further developed in Abdalhadi Nimer Abu Jweid’s (2016) “The Fall of National Identity in Chinua Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart*.” Abu Jweid (2016) tackles identity, in Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart*, as a paradigm of national identity. He (2016) maintains that the novel’s protagonist’s identity represents the whole national identity. When the protagonist feels defeated, he decides to commit suicide. Such suicidal action is the exemplification of his identity loss, which, in turn, exemplifies the fall and transformation of the national identity into the European identity; Abu Jweid’s (2016) writes: “National identity is constrained by colonial Eurocentrism” (p.530). At this point, the protagonist’s rejection of Eurocentrism is a conspicuous example of the perennial resistance to imperialism that brought new cultural norms to his native homeland, Nigeria. Simultaneously, his suicide connotes the implied fall of traditional national identity challenged by British colonialism.

Elham Shayegh (2020) approaches identity on the grounds of the self-other relationship. She (2020) says that identity emerges out of this relationship. However, she (2020) tackles identity from a cultural perspective. Therefore, identity and its relative cultural traits appear out of the self-other relationship which is the original point of the dichotomy between culture and identity; Shayegh (2020) writes: “As every identity is shaped based on play differences between self and other, no culture and cultural identity can point to a single or a pure point of origin” (p.106). In this manner, identity is the representative feature of identity. As a result, culture and identity are reconciled by the self-other relationship. Notwithstanding, there is an obstacle threatening such reconciliation. This obstacle is political discourse. This discourse considers the foreign colonial interference with national affairs as a kind of “alterity,” or othering which must be refuted because political discourses basically “fail to open the concept of cultural identity through redefining its relationship with alterity” (p.105). Accordingly, political discourse hampers the possible rapprochement between culture and identity. Being so, Shayegh (2020) suggests that political discourse must be neglected to guarantee the emergence of a certain cultural identity representing a specific ethnic group or nation.

In *Homi Bhabha: An Introduction and Critique*, Andrew McLaverty-Robinson (2020) approaches identity in terms of Homi Bhabha’s conceptualisation of ambivalence. The core conceptual implication of ambivalence is the opposing dimensions and perceptions concerning a certain culture. In essence, ambivalence exemplifies a cultural duality representing the colonized other’s dichotomy of identity. That is, it is the meticulous incarnation of the consistent fluctuation between one ethnic identity and its exact opposite. McLaverty-Robinson (2020) says that identity embodies the simultaneous binary opposition of attraction and repulsion which “is an effect of discursive ambivalence” (p.308). Postcolonial critical insights render ambivalence a specific implication regarding such binary opposition. Bhabha is considered the milestone theorist of ambivalence since he postulates discursive claims on ambivalence and its involvement with other pertinent conceptions, chief among them being mimicry, mockery, and hybridity. In its broadest sense, ambivalence encompasses the intricate ethnic mixture of the colonizer and the colonized subjects.

The colonized subjects, in this respect, are sometimes complicit and sometimes resistant. Such fluctuation exemplifies the essential existence of colonial ambivalence. At this point, colonial discourse describes has concomitant affinity with the colonized subject since it could be exploitive and nurturing. Consequently, Bhabha’s conceptualisation of ambivalence is merely a disruption of the hegemonic colonial authority; and colonial domination deforms the relationship between the colonized subject and the colonizers due to the fact that “the experience of colonialism is an experience of a split identity” (McLaverty-Robinson, 2020, p.491). The critical point, here, is that colonial discourse does not welcome ambivalence as it is detested by the colonizers

who strive for superiority and domination over the colonized subjects. For this reason, colonial discourse attempts to produce docile compliant colonized subjects that might reproduce its integral assumptions, values, and habits i.e., imitation of the colonizers. Fatima Ali Al-Khamisi's (2022), in "Globalization and National Identity Conservation in the Literary Works of the Saudi Thinker Ghazi Al-Gosaibi," argues that while interacting with diverse cultures and sharing space with them does not grant permission to enforce alterations upon them, likewise, demonstrating reverence towards these cultures should not lead to blindly mimic or copy their practices (p.49). The reason behind this copying lies in the possibility of creating cultural equilibrium between the colonized subjects and their colonizers. Imitation, therefore, is the nexus of mimicry, which is one representative aspect of ambivalence developed by Bhabha. The crucial vitality of mimicry argues McLaverty-Robinson (2020) relates to its construction of ambivalence. Mimicry, to some extent, resembles mockery. Yet, for Bhabha, they have discrepant views of the colonials' discourse. However, both of them disturb the domination of colonial discourse.

In *The Roma and their Struggle for Identity in Contemporary Europe*, Huub van Baar and Angéla Kóczé (2020) discuss the concept of identity in the context of social conservatism. Therefore, they (2020) describe society as a medium of "politics of identity" (p.25). In this case, such politics entails the comprehension of "ethnicity and identity" which manifest in the trajectory of social ethnic solidarities (p.24). Being so, identity exemplifies the ongoing debate concerning the dichotomy between "essentialism versus constructivism" (p.28). As such, the social peculiarities of identity refer to the "dualistic debate" which is reflected in the current social state of affairs (p.25). Here, Baar and Kóczé (2020) relate identity to the contradictory opposition between social essentialism and constructivism that have been long challenged over the course of time due to the ever-changing social norms: "the identity-related binary opposition of essentialism and constructivism has been thoroughly challenged" (p.28).

Mahmood Mamdani (2020), in *When Victims Become Killers*, explores the concept of political identity because it is rarely tackled in postcolonial studies. Political identity, argues Mamdani, is the core of crises that influence the social clashes among nations, such as civil wars. The abundant nature of these crises resulted in new cultural interactions among people; and political identity began to take its ultimate shape in the course of these interactions; Mamdani (2020) comments that political identity appears "in an era when political crisis and civil war have come to be seen as ubiquitous, it is surprising how little academic writing there has been on the question of political identity" (p.21). Political identity, furthermore, develops out of power. That is, power is the most vital tool to construct a specific identity according to politics. In such cases, politicians construct society's identity in the light of their political agendas; and the proper organization of this politics depends on the kind of identity needed to be formed: "political identities are the consequence of how power is organized. The organization of power not only defines the parameters of the political community, telling us who is included and who is left out, it also differentiates the bounded political community internally" (p.22). Hence, political identity develops to turn into another form. Culture plays a decisive role in this deployment. The ultimate construction of political identity becomes the cultural identity per se. "political identity was in reality an expression of cultural identity" (p.21). The concomitant relationship between politics and culture yields in genuine and unprecedented meaning of identity; and primarily determines this meaning: "a cultural identity that also became political in the context of indirect-rule colonialism" (p.36). Strikingly, Mamdani (2020) alludes to colonialism as the integral impetus of constructing cultural identity created by ideological politics that is "enforced by power"; and, consequently, it inherently embodies "a starting point for the forging of identities" in term of suppressive political power (p.23). Mamdani (2020) finds that political identity, which is the core of cultural identity, participates in establishing new states governed by dominant political identities; Mamdani (2020) continues: "political identities need to be understood in relation to the process of state formation" (p.23). In this sense, political identities could create new political-based states by virtue of forging cultural identities.

Lia Paradis (2020) pursues the concept of identity in relation to collective memory. She ascribes identity change to a certain geographical terrain. Such terrain is the location of identity change in that location; Paradis (2020) writes "memory and identity become contested terrain" (p.139). Furthermore, collective memory develops and changes due to a specific colonial phenomenon. Paradis (2020) cites the colonised Sudan as a "terrain" of collective memory whose cultural "mandate is to preserve the records of any individual who was connected to

the Sudan at any time during British rule” (p.10). As the collective memory changes rapidly according to the colonial enterprise, it becomes a vital tool to get rid of the imperial plans of colonialism. Being so, the change of identity via collective memory is a means of rejecting imperialism. In this sense, the native collective memory, like the Sudanese memory, turns to be a counter-collective memory to obliterate the imperial collective memory; Paradis (2020) continues: “the rejection of the collective imperial memory” (p.139). The native collective memory, therefore, is enhanced by people who have undergone colonial experience. When these people come back home, they reinforce their homeland’s independence which inherently opposes any imperial marginalisation; consequently, the native collective memory is “available for those who returned at the time of independence” (p.139). Paradis (2020) concludes her argument by emphasizing the privileges of collective memory and its influential role in empowering the native identity. She (2020) contends that collective identity authorises the natives to be independent since they lead a distinctive experience in the face of colonial imperialism.

Paradis (2020) maintains that this experience is superior to the whole national identity. In other words, when the native individual identity is sustained, the entire national identity becomes powerful. Paradis (2020) underscores the individual identity by polarising an analogy between the native Sudanese identity and its British counterpart; whereby the Sudanese rejection of the British hegemony is interrupted by the development of hybrid identity in the context of cultural assimilation between the British and the Sudanese. On that account, Paradis (2020) argues that the native collective memory “privileges personal experience and individual memory over national memory and identity, whether that identity is British, Sudanese or the hybrid identity of a postcolonial subject” (p.10). Consequently, the native collective memory is the exact opposite of the British hegemonic memory utilised for imperial practices in the Sudanese cultural context. In both cases, the collective memory remains a paradigm of the opposing attitudes between the natives and their colonisers. In the long run, the native collective memory creates hybrid identity homogeneity between them for the sake of humanistic co-existence. In this study, however, the main focus will be on the exploration of the conception of historical identity from an authorial perspective in Mda’s *The Zulus of New York*.

DISCUSSION

The novel, targeted by the study, hinges on profound ethnic issues. The titular insight of it the “Zulus” has a striking indication of the racial amalgamation of African ethnic stereotypes and Western ethnicities. Such ethnicities include America and England. The Zulus is an African tribe, and some of its members are sent to perform circus shows first in England and later in America. Though this group has a relative African ethnic solipsism, it represents the whole African ethnic paradigm. As the plot unfolds, the temporal setting appears in the 1880s when William Leonard Hunt, who is also introduced as The Great Farini, sends the Zulus to England and America. The novel’s main concentration is placed on one of these Zulu performers. This performer is a veteran warrior who staunchly participated in bathing King Cetshwayo in a holy place known as Inkatha hut. Yet, he violates his loyal allegiance to the king by committing a romantic tryst with a woman; and this action seems to be commonly considered as botched behavior by his compatriots. As a result, he escapes; and he takes Cape Town as a safe place for his short sojourn.

Then, The Great Farini recruits him in his circus squad. He undergoes several personal experiences while performing in London and New York. These experiences polish his mentality and view of life. In New York, he falls in love with a woman, Dinka. However, their love is unrequited. The novel offers deep allusion to the burgeoning popularity of the Zulu tribes, especially after their decisive victory over the British troops at the Battle of Isandlwana (1879). In New York, the circus performances are done in one of the active places Madison Square Gardens. In doing so, Mda races the historical evolution of the Zulu ethnicity and its pertinent changes due to the cultural discrepancies among the Zulus and other British and American ethnicities. Such cultural assimilation is reconciled within the novel’s broad historical context, especially when different ethnic races meet each other on the basis of cultural backgrounds. Mda uses fictional characters to reflect this reality.

Notwithstanding, the cultural interaction among these ethnicities is still a subject to native identity and how it changes over the course of time. That is, the Zulus’ original African identity is affected by the interaction with the British and American ethnicities. The novel depicts the relationship between the natives of Zulus and their

cultural contact with the American and British cultures. This relationship is appropriated by the movement of the Zulus individuals to different places as they undergo different cultural interlocations with foreigners. This essence of this contact is triggered by the Western predilection to have a new confrontation with the African ethnicities. Mda, consequently, portrays this confrontation in the light of the Zulus's feeling of alienation as they move to other places which inherently differ from their native land. As the Zulu group goes through these places, they suffer from injustice. They seem like casualties of bias as they are asked to do entertainment work for the revel of other nations, and they do not perform any work for their own benefit. The essential indication of the historical identity in the novel appears at the beginning of the plot when the group of Zulus men are taken as performers to Britain and America in the winter of 1885. The allusion to the historical past lies in Mad's tendency to find a proper solution to the ethnic crisis of the native identity.

The novel's obsession with historical identity is reflected in Mda's conceptualisation of identity formation through building the essential tenets of the characters. Such characters embody the concept of historical identity because they are the authentic fictional replicas emulating real Zulus ethnicity which attempts to decolonise the Western hegemony. Mda (2019) emphasises the need for devising characters that look like quasi-real people depicted by the story itself; Mda (2019) writes: "My [Mad's] mission is to tell a good story. If I don't make my characters human – the story will fail (Parentheses added)" (p.1). Strikingly, Mda's (2019) literary aspiration to create a virtual world during colonialism and how it had become more complex, especially when the Zulus ethnicity had embarked serious mission to restore its original identity before the advent of Western domination of their native homeland. Notwithstanding, the postcolonial implications of ethnic identity are questioned by the re-consideration of conventional authorities that maintained the original stature for identity. Consequently, re-visiting the original roosts of identity incarnates the possibility of reviving it again "in exploring the status of traditional authorities" (Fombad and Steytler, 2024, p.75). The position of historical identity, in this regard, emerges when Mda gives his characters specific ethnic idiosyncrasies to highlight the mature development of their postcolonial mentality and propensity to be equal to their imperial and Western counterparts.

The reciprocal relationship between the Zulus and Western imperialism, represented by America and Britain, is carried out by means of the authorial intersection of the worldview of the novel as a universal text dealing with the gradual development of the Zulus dead identity. In doing so, he calls for a new re-birth of the dead identity, and, simultaneously, unravelling the role of history in reviving this identity from scratch. Historical identity, therefore, emanates from the inherited residuals of the ancestors' original identity; and it does not completely cope with the new imperial cultural norms that might change its basic formation i.e., it does not totally accept "identity construction that emerged in reaction to the colonial encounter" (Huju, 2024, p.117). By pursuing their native identity, Zulus ethnicity deliberately attempts to establish their identity again by tracing back their native social customs and traditions; Mda (2019) evidently states this historical fact in the following comment on the novel:

"The novel is centred on the life of one of these Zulu performers, tracing it from Ondini in KwaZulu, where he was one of the two highly-esteemed warriors who ritually bathed King Cetshwayo in his sacred Inkatha hut, to his escape after a botched tryst with one of the harem women, to his sojourn in Cape Town where he is recruited by The Great Farini, to his performances in London, and finally to New York where he falls into unrequited love with a Dinka woman, another caged exhibit. (p.2)

According to this claim, Mda apparently states the significant reference to history as a decisive influential factor in shaping the Zulus again. Though the Zulus identity had undergone formidable transformation by the imperial colonialism, it still exemplifies the African ethnic stereotype affected by the advent of Western hegemony on African lands. In essence, the concept of colonial identity entails the natives' adaptation to the new imperial culture because "social transformation implies imperialism's social norms brought to the colonized nations' native society" (Abu Jweid, 2023, p.17). Mda is aware of this ethnic fact, and he projects it onto his narrative description of Zulus victory over the British hegemony. The native Zulus begin to obtain their independent identity by searching for self-autonomy from exploitation or marginalization. They find that their native identity is the source of their stamina and fortitude, and it is very vital for reviving their dead identity. They are psychically empowered by their triumph over the imperial hegemony; Mda (2019) comments: "[My characters]

have agency and psychological motivation but are influenced by events in the historical record. I place characters in the context of history but their actions are their own (Parentheses added)” (p.2). As a deduction, Mda seems to have an avid interest in employing history to restore the Zulus extinct identity through realistic characters.

The question of historical identity could also be found in the novel's depiction of the Zulus' aspiration to integrate culture and identity within the same social scope to settle down the basic traits of the original identity. As a matter of fact, the postcolonial identity requires the agglomeration of both “collective culture and ethnicity” (Abu Jweid, 2022, p.6). In this sense, culture and ethnicity are contiguous poles for uniting and forming ethnic identity. Nevertheless, the formation of the new identities is hindered by the colonial powers “which remain troubled and fragmented” (Mavengano and Mhute, 2024, p.7). In Mda's *The Zulus of New York*, the concept of historical identity emerges from mixing historical events and the Zulus will be stout and autonomous. Mda (2019) reflects upon the historical factors of the Zulus identity by polarizing the psychological dimension that is sustained by colonial experience gained by emphasising the need for reverting back to the past: “I am trying to teach my people about their past ... I'm writing about a culture I know and have researched but I'm also approximating terms which I think would be relevant to a Zulu of that time. But my characters must have psychological motivation and justification. They are products of their own experience” (p.2).

CONCLUSION

This study attempted to explore history as a medium of reviving South African extinct identity in Mda's *The Zulus of New York*. The study aimed to find a new variation of ethnic identity which has been studied intensively by different scholars. In this study, the concept of historical identity has been foregrounded to demonstrate how the seemingly extinct identity of the native South African tribes might be revived and considered again in the light of history. The study's focus on the historical aspect of ethnic identity was to offer new critical insights to approach ethnicity in postcolonial narratives, especially the selected novel, for creating uncommon impression of the concept of identity which is studied in differently by researchers. The various contexts of the concept of identity – discussed in the literature review – bolsters the current study's exploration of the concept of historical identity that could be added to the previous postcolonial contexts. For this reason, the study of historical identity in Mda's *The Zulus of New York* is ascribed to three interrelated findings.

First, the concept of historical identity is viable to be discussed in terms of the native extinct identity. That is, South African native societies had been a subject to drastic cultural changes brought by the imperial Western view. To some extent, these societies could rarely cope with the newly arrived cultural norms regarding the ethnic identity because their original cultural genuinely contradicts with the imperial culture. They tried to find possible outlets to absorb the new culture, but they could not utterly achieve their humanistic co-existence with the imperial culture. This is due to the fact that they embody the notion of metropolitan culture which has its new cultural and social ties from the imperial hegemony on their native lands. This cultural assimilation is the essence of the study's second finding i.e., the implicit narratives insights of dead identity portrayed in Mda's *The Zulus of New York*. To clarify, the novel abounds with narrative descriptions that holds diverse narrative connotation.

The idea of dead identity could be found in the bulk of the narrative historical allusion to the Zulus highlighted in the main course of the plot. Zulus ethnicity is an acclaimed and brilliant tribal component of not only the South African ethnicity, but also the entire African ethnicity. Consequently, the extinction of such ethnicity would lead to the disappearance of some minor ethnicities in the whole Africa. As a result, the study has identified this ethnicities in order to shed more light on its significance in the historical identity of South Africa. Third, the study has examined the issue of historical identity and its implication of dead identity from an authorial perspective. The author, Zakes Mda, is overtly concerned with the role of history in shaping of native identity. Being so, he sorely projects this concern in the narrative world of the novel to give us a vivid picture of how identity could be transformed, reinforced, and ultimately revived through meticulous narrative descriptions.

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